# History of the 418th Night Fighter Squadron

# from New Guinea to Japan in World War II

Editors: Stanley E. Logan David O. and Millie Sullivan

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Activated: 1 April 1943 Deactivated: 20 February 1947

Cover: "Kingbee" Official Squadron emblem.

Over and through a blue-green disk, a king bee black and golden orange, wearing a red crown, holding aloft a lighted lantern proper with the right foreleg, representing RADAR, and grasping a gray machine gun in the left foreleg, representing ARMAMENT, tip-toeing across a white cloud formation in base at night, and peering over the edge with a look of ferocity on his face: a crescent moon and two stars of yellow in background. (Approved 11 October 1943)

# Editors: Stanley E. Logan David O. and Millie Sullivan

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The **418th Night Fighter Squadron** was the first Squadron to be deployed in the Pacific during World War II from the Night Fighter training program. During the almost two years of combat operations, as part of the U.S. Army Air Forces 5th Air Force, beginning in November 1943, aircraft flown by the Squadron were the P-70, P-38, B-25, and P-61. Operations included attacking and sinking enemy shipping, attacks on enemy air fields, local base defensive night patrol, night protective cover over convoys and beachheads, and night intruder missions over enemy territory, in all kinds of weather. The 418th, along with other Night Fighter Squadrons, played a crucial role in taking the night sky back from the enemy and reaching victory in World War II.

**This history**, completed in 2001, is the original Squadron history, written in the field during World War II, resurrected from fading copies, edited for spelling and grammar, and formatted for easier reading. "Postscripts" provide additional clarifying information and current recollection by Squadron members of events. The many photographs and maps of operational areas added, and related material in the Appendices, round out this more complete history.

Scanning of readable original text, photos, and maps, and design and preparation for computerized printing was by former 1st Lt. Stanley E. Logan, a pilot in the Squadron. Co-Editors, former T/Sgt. David Sullivan, Squadron Communications Section, and his wife Millie, typed fully one-half of the text and assisted with continuous editing chores and recommendations.

While this history is not copyrighted, to enable maximum utilization by remaining Squadron members and family descendants of Squadron members, this source should be credited. Other use or reproduction of those photos or other material in this history, which are used here with permission from other copyrighted publications, will require permission by the user directly from those copyright holders.

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Bronze plaque on the memorial wall, at the U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado, dedicated in June 1992.

# **Acknowledgments**

The primary acknowledgments are to the members of the 418th Night Fighter Squadron, without whom there would be no history to prepare. These include the twenty-eight comrades-in-arms killed during World War II, the many we have lost since the war, the declining remaining members of the Squadron, and all of the family members who put up with each of us over the years. Acknowledgments are due to the unsung and unidentified historians "volunteered" to that duty by Commanding Officers.

Computerized colorization of the P-61 tail, on the Squadron Insignia page, to show the blue stripe Tail Insignia, was done by David Logan (Stan Logan's son).

Several persons helped with maps of the operations areas. First, it was Roland Fisher (the first Operations Officer of the Squadron) who urged including a map showing the route of the U.S.S. General John Pope troopship that took the Squadron from the Hampton Roads P.O.E. to Milne Bay, New Guinea, with a continuation to the first base at Dobodura. Roland provided the route input for this map. Also, Roland supplied the base map of New Guinea and helped by identifying the many locations mentioned in the history text, for addition to the New Guinea map. The Pacific Ocean area of operations map was adapted and extended from a map in "Queen of the Midnight Skies," by Garry Pape. The Philippine map was prepared by Robert Tyldesley (the last CO of the Squadron) and his daughter Linda Tyldesley. Maps for the Okinawa to Japan area were also assembled by Bob Tyldesley.

Each photo used in this book has its source identified in brackets at the end of the caption (generally the last name of an individual). Many of the photos are from Squadron members. Some of these were submitted by more than one person; the "credit" is given for the photo source selected for scanning and use. Other photos are from published books, each with other earlier original credits, and are used here by permission. The photo and map credit details are listed below.

Aviation Pub.	"Pilot's Manual for Northrop P-61 Black Widow," Aviation Publications,	
<b>T</b> . 1	Appleton,WI 54912-0357	
Fisher	Roland T. Fisher	
H. Gordon	Hugh L. Gordon	
M. Gordon	Mortimer I. Gordon	
Liberatore	Mike Liberatore	
Logan	Stanley E. Logan	
Pape	Garry R. Pape, "Queen of the Midnight Skies," "Northrup P-61 Black Widow,	
	The Complete History and Combat Record."	
Sellers	James F. Sellers	
Smith	Mahalla Smith	
Sullivan	David O. Sullivan	
Tidrick	Lois Tidrick and son Brian Tidrick	
Thompson	Warren Thompson, "Northrup P-61 Black Widow," "P-61 Black Widow Units	
	of World War II."	
Tyldesley	Robert H. Tyldesley and daughter Linda Tyldesley	
Vaughn	Herbert C. Vaughn	

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# Introduction

Early in World War II, it became apparent that Allied Forces were vulnerable to nighttime attacks by enemy aircraft, and that a night fighting defense was critically needed. The early capability to meet the need was developed by the British. Radar (Radio Detection and Ranging) was then in its infancy. The first Aircraft Interception (AI) radar was the British Mark IV. In Europe, Beaufighters and Mosquitos were adapted to use this AI radar as night fighters. The U.S. version of the Mark IV was designated as the SCR-540. The Douglas A-20 Havoc, an attack bomber, was converted to use the SCR-540 AI radar, and was then designated the P-70. The P-70 served as an interim night fighter until the Northrup P-61 Black Widow became available. The P-61, using the more advanced SCR-720 AI radar, was the only World War II aircraft designed from the ground up as a night fighter. The P-61 had a wingspan of 66 feet, the same as the B-25 medium bomber, but innovations such as spoiler ailerons, provided maneuverability second to none. Armament consisted of four twenty millimeter cannon and in some models, a turret with four .50 caliber machine guns. The P-61s in the 418th Night Fighter Squadron were delivered with or were converted to having four under-wing pylons for carrying either external fuel tanks or 1,000 pound bombs. The air crew consisted of pilot and radar operator (RO). When the turret was installed, a gunner was added to the crew.

There were eight Night Fighter Squadrons in the PACIFIC, eight in the ETO (European Theater of Operations), and two in the CBI (China Burma India) theaters, plus several training organizations. The 418th Night Fighter Squadron, activated on 1 April 1943, was the first Squadron to be deployed to the Pacific from the Night Fighter training program, and arrived at Milne Bay, New Guinea on 2 November 1943. The 6th Night Fighter Squadron, based in the Hawaiian Islands, had two Detachments operating in The Solomon Islands and New Guinea, beginning several months prior to arrival of the 418th, but these Detachments were disbanded in December 1943. While small in number (only 485 Night Fighter crews were trained in the USAF and only 741 P-61s were built), our Night Fighter Squadrons played a crucial role in taking the night sky back from the enemy and reaching victory in World War II.

The history of the 418th Night Fighter Squadron was pecked out on manual typewriters with dirty keys, by various historians assigned in sequence as time went along. Formats changed and in the press of combat operations and base moving, not everything of interest became recorded. Over the years, available copies faded, and successive photo-copies became more and more degraded. Some pages were barely legible with careful examination. In an effort to rescue the history, Stanley E. Logan, former 1st Lt. Pilot who joined the Squadron on Mindoro in January 1945, volunteered to take on the project to get the history into a computerized digital form. David O. Sullivan, former T/Sgt. in the Communications Section, and a member of the original Squadron contingent, and his wife Millie, volunteered to help. The Sullivans retyped about one-half of the text from scratch and completed detailed editing to correct punctuation and grammar. The resulting text is basically the original, with some chapter divisions and titles added. Because some events didn't get recorded, "Postscripts" are added throughout the text to fill in some missing information. *Each postscript appears in italic type within a shaded block*, to distinguish it from the original text. Photographs, maps, and related material in the Appendices, round out the completed history.

# Summary

The activation date for the 418th Night Fighter Squadron was 1 April 1943. The T/O called for 40 officers and 238 enlisted men. Capt. Carroll C. Smith (later, in October, became Major Smith) was assigned as Commanding Officer. After six months of preparations and training, the Squadron personnel sailed for the South Pacific on the U.S.S. General John Pope, on 6 October 1943. After passing through the Panama Canal, and touching Brisbane, and Townsville, Australia, camping briefly at Milne Bay in New Guinea, the first base was established at Dobodura, Papua, New Guinea. The 418th became part of the U.S. Army Air Forces 5th Air Force. Detachment "A" of the 6th Night Fighter Squadron was attached for a short time before being disbanded. Aircraft were P-70s and P-38s. The early combat missions were maintaining night alerts and patrols, convoy cover, and strafing Jap camps and shipping. The first enemy aircraft destroyed by the Squadron was by Major Smith, in a P-38, on 13 January 1944.

In March 1944, the Squadron moved to Finschhafen, on the coast of Northeast New Guinea. During the first half of April, action against the enemy consisted of night patrols, and in the last half of that month, night intruder missions commenced, with strafing of enemy anti-aircraft positions and barge landings. Then, in May, the move was made to Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea. It should be noted that in each of these moves and in the moves that followed, the process generally involved a ground echelon (water and land) first moving the bulk of the Squadron equipment and personnel to the new site where camp was set up. Air operations continued out of the old base until the new base was ready and aircraft were then moved up. There was a variation in the case of the move from Finschhafen to Hollandia. Flying personnel and some ground personnel first went to Port Moresby (Papua, New Guinea) for transitional flying in B-25s, preparatory for night intruder work.

In June 1944, a detachment of several combat crews went to Wakde Island (not far from the Hollandia base) to begin operations with B-25s. Night harassing raids were made on several airdromes. Strafing and bombing runs destroyed approximately thirty-two enemy aircraft on the ground. A daylight raid by the entire Squadron on Rabaul, staged out of Nadzab in bad weather, knocked out the Japanese radio station at Rabaul, among other targets. Night intruder missions continued out of Wakde Island until mid-August. Attacks against Nip shipping destroyed several ships and an oil barge. There is a dramatic crew survival and rescue account of a B-25 that crash landed in a swamp after having an engine shot out.

Reconversion from B-25s to P-61s began in mid-August 1944. On 16 September, the air echelon moved to Owi Island (west of Wakde Island, adjacent to Biak Island) with the new P-61s to assist the 421st Night Fighter Squadron in night fighter patrols for the defense of Owi. While these operations continued, the ground echelon broke camp at Hollandia and traveled by LST in a convoy to the next base on Morotai Island, north of Halmahera. In early October, the air echelon moved up from Owi Island to Morotai, along with three GCI (Ground Controlled Interception) radar controllers, to establish a night aerial defense. It was over Morotai that the mettle of the new P-61s was first displayed. On the night of 7 October 1944, the first of many Nip aircraft to be destroyed by 418th crews flying the P-61 was achieved, with the classic night fighter technique of being vectored to the vicinity of the enemy aircraft by GCI, followed by interception direction by the Radar Operator (RO) with the Aircraft Interception radar (AI), and finally visual closure and firing by the pilot. At the end of that month, night intruder work with B-25s was also conducted in an attempt to knock out the night operations of the Nips.

The P-61 Black Widow was designed and built specifically for night fighting. It was equipped with the SCR-720 AI radar, a great improvement over the SCR-540 used on the P-70. Armament was four 20mm cannons in the belly, and on some of the aircraft, a dorsal turret with four .50 caliber machine guns.

During November 1944, two more kills were made with P-61s, and as an additional surprise for the Nips, P-38s, in cooperation with searchlights, were used to destroy four more Nip aircraft plus one probably destroyed. Meanwhile, the ground echelon departed from Morotai in early November, and arrived at Leyte, Philippine Islands, in mid-November for about a two-week-long encampment employing infantry-style perimeter defense, until continuing on to San Jose on Mindoro, Philippine Islands.

December 1944 was an eventful month. Nine Nip aircraft were destroyed that month by P-61s, one over Morotai and eight in the vicinity of Mindoro. The air echelon left Morotai for Mindoro on 24 December 1944, by way of Tacloban on Leyte. In the midst of intense Nip naval and air activity, the air crews were back and forth between Tacloban and Mindoro. The ground echelon left Leyte in early December on LST 738, but during the landing on 14 December, a kamikaze plane dove into the LST, setting it on fire, forcing personnel into the water. No one in the organization was killed, but most of the Squadron equipment was lost, requiring much scrounging to get back into operation. The kills this month included four in one night (29-30 December) by the team of Major Smith and 1st Lt. Porter, which along with previous victories made Major Smith the top night fighter ace.

In January 1945, five more Nip aircraft were shot down by P-61s. Two of these were at Mindoro, two were to the north near Manila (Luzon, P.I.) and one was farther north, over Lingayan Gulf (Luzon, P.I.). Several of the victories in late December and in January were while providing protection to naval task forces, including the Lingayan Gulf invasion force. In mid-January, Capt. William B. Sellers joined the Squadron to relieve Major Smith as Commanding Officer. The seventeen enemy aircraft shot down by 418th Night Fighter Squadron crews in the three-month period of November 1944 through January 1945 apparently obtained respect by the Japanese command, who were not willing to further risk their dwindling aircraft supply to the P-61 threat. During night patrols in February, in several instances, shortly after GCI started radioing vectoring instructions to our night fighters, a "bogey" would turn and "run" and disappear off of the GCI screen.

Ten replacement pilot/RO crews arrived at the end of January and beginning of February 1945. All of these crews had extensive training in night fighter tactics, including typically more than 100 hours of P-70 flying time and fifty hours of P-61 flying time, and were ready and eager to take on assignments. As the threat of enemy air strikes declined, airborne local patrols were shifted first to ground ready alert, in which crews were in a P-61, ready to take off at a minute's notice by light gun flash from the control tower, and then to ground alert where crews sacked out on cots near the aircraft, ready within a few minutes. Night patrols were started from Mindoro to the vicinity of Manila during the Battle of Manila. These patrols were for protection against enemy aircraft, tracking the locations of enemy columns, and serving as artillery spotters to correct fire from U.S. artillery on Jap batteries and vehicle convoys.

Missions in March 1945 were mostly convoy and beachhead night cover, including landings at Lubang and Palawan Islands. Convoys in the vicinity of Mindoro, Lubang and the Legaspi Peninsula (Luzon) were covered. The Legaspi beachhead itself was covered on 1 April. In the April through June period, a technique for bombing by radar was developed and demonstrated for application in night

intruder missions to come. Training during this period included day fighter tactics for use in case we were jumped by Nips during missions, including dawn and dusk periods.

In June, a few missions to Formosa and the China coast were run to demonstrate P-61 long-range capabilities using external drop fuel tanks. Late in the month and extending into July, rotating detachments of crews staged out of the tiny island of Sanga Sanga in the Sulu Archipelago (southwest of Mindanao), on missions covering the invasion convoys and landings at Balikipapan in Borneo. These were long missions with drop tanks, extending about six hours. The water echelon for the move from Mindoro to Okinawa, in the Ryukyus chain of islands, boarded the LST on 26 June 1945, and after a stopover in Subic Bay, arrived at Okinawa on 9 July. The air echelon departed from Mindoro on 25 July, refueling at Laoag at the northern tip of Luzon. Because of bad weather, the continuation to Okinawa was delayed until the next day. The Squadron, now in Japanese waters on Okinawa, was ready to participate in Air Offensive Japan.

Several other night fighter squadrons on Ie Shima, next to Okinawa, were assigned to local defense, and the 418th was assigned to night intruder missions against enemy airdromes to alleviate air attacks against our forces on Okinawa. Miako Jima, southwest of Okinawa was harassed the entire night of 29 July to keep imminent Nip missions from being launched. A nightly series of intruder missions to Kyushu, Japan was initiated 28 July. By the end of the month, all crews had the opportunity to go over Japan.

August 1945 opened with a bang with bombing and strafing missions over Kyushu, hitting Tomitake, Tsuiki, Fukuoka, Kumamoto, and Konoya, as well as a few missions over China. Some estimates indicate that the night fighter activities cut down enemy night attacks on Okinawa by fully two-thirds. On the night of 7 August, a Betty was destroyed in the traffic pattern at Kumamoto, representing the final victory by the Squadron. These intruder missions, involving every crew in the Squadron, were before the Hiroshima atom bomb (6 August), between the two atom bombs, after the Nagasaki bomb (9 August), and right up to the end of the war on 14 August.

In late August 1945, after the war's end, the exodus of high point men began. In September, the Squadron assumed part of the local patrols formerly assigned to marines. These missions were to guard against any die hard Nips who weren't ready to give up. On 27 September, the water echelon departed for Tokyo Bay, the goal of these many months! After dodging a typhoon at sea, the water echelon arrived in Yokohama harbor in Japan on 6 October. Back on Okinawa, the air echelon was hit with two typhoons in October, damaging the aircraft. As soon as repairs were completed after the first typhoon, the second one hit, requiring a new repair activity. Finally, on 24 October 1945, the air echelon flew to Atsugi Airfield, on Honshu, not far from Tokyo. Personnel continued to leave for home in droves and replacements came in.

On 5 November, our Commanding Officer, Major William B. Sellers, was sent home and Capt. Carl R. Tidrick became CO. Also in November, surveillance flights along the coast of Honshu were initiated, looking for any threatening ground action and exhibiting a United States presence to the populace. In December, the Squadron had ten aircraft assigned: nine P-61s and one B-25.

As 1946 began, the Squadron continued conversion from a wartime combat unit to post-war duties. 1st Lt. Robert H. Tyldesley closed-out the 547th Night Fighter Squadron, then also based at Atsugi Airfield, and joined the 418th as CO, replacing Capt. Carl R. Tidrick who then went home. Around 7 March 1946, the Squadron left Atsugi Airfield and returned to Okinawa. On 20 February 1947, the 418th Night Fighter Squadron was deactivated and became the 4th All Weather Squadron.

This summary cannot do justice to our twenty-eight comrades-in-arms lost during the war. Their names are listed on the Memoriam page and the reader is referred to the full history text for the accounts. The 418th Night Fighter Squadron served with distinction, intercepting and destroying twenty enemy aircraft over bases and convoys, plus one probably destroyed, and more than thirty destroyed on the ground by bombing and strafing missions. In addition, many enemy ships were destroyed. Night patrols covering convoys and beachheads protected naval and ground forces. In the last weeks of the war, the Squadron brought the war to the Japanese doorstep, with one enemy aircraft shot down over their home base, and unknown damage to enemy aircraft on the ground and facilities from night bombing of airdromes.

# **IN MEMORIAM**

# 418th Night Fighter Squadron Comrades-in-Arms Killed or Missing in Action and presumed dead

listed in order of loss

2nd Lt.	Harry B. Crum	Pilot	O-746053	
Sgt.	William J. Winfurther	Aerial Gunner	13060134	
S/Sgt.	Roy B. Bishop	Crew Chief	34386071	
2nd Lt.	William R. Carriger	Pilot	O-743408	
Lt.	Edward Craig	Pilot	O-743420	
2nd Lt.	Robert M. Forrestal	Pilot	O-746073	
F/O	Harry D. Holley	Observer	T-180073	
1st Lt.	Richard B. Ferris	Pilot	O-460141	
Cpl.	Ernest N. Ferrari	Radio Operator	33205734	
S/Sgt.	D.S. Thompson, Jr.	Radio Operator	6394019	
Sgt.	Miguel J. Apodaca	Aerial Gunner	39277487	
1st Lt.	Gordon J. Schmeisser	Pilot	O-728029	
2nd Lt.	Theodore E. Kara	Radar Observer	O-869592	
Sgt.	Isaac D. Leslie	Radio Operator	35260111	
Sgt.	Vernon A. Patterson	Aerial Gunner	38447259	
Capt.	Robert C. Blackman*	Pilot	O-885365	
1st Lt.	Jean B. Harper*	Radar Observer	O-885363	
	* on temporary loan from 547th N.F.S.			
2nd Lt.	John D. Agan	Pilot	O-746007	
F/O	Hubert Hutchinson, Jr.	Radar Observer	T-180100	
2nd Lt.	Donald H. Armstrong	Pilot	O-773985	
F/O	James J. Lally	Radar Observer	T-180252	
T/Sgt.	Andrew J. Cobb	Crew Chief	34336058	
Cpl.	David Markowitz	Camera Technician	33600770	
2nd Lt.	Henry L. Gurley	Pilot	O-774134	
2nd Lt.	Chester A. Poretta	Radar Observer	O-931776	
Cpl.	Arthur C. Beauduan	Aerial Gunner	11042016	
2nd Lt.	Raymond A. Cozza	Pilot	O-780867	
F/O	Robert E. Odell	Radar Observer	T-180449	

# **Insignia of the 418th Night Fighter Squadron**

Tail insignia: BLUE stripe bordered with WHITE WHITE crescent and star WHITE tail number

(the tail serial number on early P-61s in the Squadron had only three digits in RED, later changed to four digits in WHITE as shown here)

Artists have <u>incorrectly</u> represented the tail markings with a **RED** stripe and yellow crescent and star, in some books and on models.



(Logan, colorized by David Logan)



**Official Squadron emblem** 



Army Air Forces shoulder patch



**Unofficial Squadron emblem** 



Fifth Air Force shoulder patch

# From Squadron Activation to Start of Combat Operations April 1943 — 31 January 1944

# **Activation Period**

The broad steps behind the activation of any one particular squadron go back to a time when it is decided, by what can be called a planning board, that for the ensuing period of operations, each separate branch or corps of the Army will need a specified number of personnel to be broken down into described units. The War Department with this broad plan in mind sends minute instructions to Commands or Air Forces, who in turn issue General Orders, activating each unit in accordance with the instructions received. These General Orders specify the unit or units to be activated, the Table of Organization to be used, together with the Table of Basic Allowance or Table of Equipment to be followed. The Orders usually have an activation schedule setting forth a time schedule to be met.

The procedure for activation requires that the seven supply agencies (Quartermaster, Air Corps Supply, Signal Corps Supply, Engineering Supply, Ordnance, Chemical Warfare, and Coast Artillery) be at the same time notified of the creation of a new baby so that automatic requisitions will be processed for the basic organizational equipment. During the period of activation, this organizational equipment comes into the squadron, beginning with typewriters and other office supplies but in most if not all cases, the actual acquisition of this much needed equipment is a source of much worry and the field of many a battle caused by the inefficient management of the system, and the lethargy of the human element through which it has to operate.

The Table of Organization under which a squadron must operate is made up supposedly from the combined experiences of soldiers who have actually operated under the conditions anticipated for the squadron or unit. They determine that the finished tactical squadron can operate efficiently with a given number of personnel broken down into specialist and non-specialist classifications. The result is supposed to be that a squadron with certain types of planes, with a fixed number of aircraft mechanics and a definite number of technicians in every section of the squadron makes for operation with maximum efficiency. The Tables of Organization or as they are invariably referred to, the T/0, allot grades and ratings to the members of the squadron based on their value and the supply and demand of that type of trained personnel; therefore, under each T/O there are ratings for the enlisted men ranging from Private First Class to Master Sergeant, as well as grades for the officers starting at Second Lieutenant and going up to Lieutenant Colonel, dependent in the final analysis upon the niche into which any one man finally falls.

Starting then with General Orders #34, dated 23 March 1943, Headquarters Army Air Forces School of Applied Tactics, Orlando, Florida, issued over the signature of Brig. General HUME PEABODY, Commandant of AAFSAT, under the activation date of 1 April 1943, we see the birth and attempt to follow the career of this, our squadron, from its first tottering steps, its checkered career to what we hope to be a glorious finis at the end of this conflict. The Activation Order in due military fashion through channels reached the desk of A-1 (Personnel Officer) of the Air Defense Department and the Machinery was underway. The A-1 whose duty it is to furnish the raw material to the extent called for in our T/O,

238 enlisted men and 40 officers, bestirred himself to the extent that on 8 April three of this required number were assigned: 1st Lt. ROWLAND H. ROBERTSON, JR., O-482794, MC, 2nd Lt. HENRY S. HOWE, O-572080, Flight Surgeon and Radar Officer, respectively, and the first enlisted man, Pvt. LORING F. TUELLS, 31134419, aircraft mechanic. By the next day, it was decided that the guiding genius of this new creation be Capt. CARROLL C. SMITH, O-418144, who was assigned as Commanding Officer on 10 April 1943. The brief summary just given is a rough outline of what the Machinery is and what should happen. What follows is a true statement of the way it actually works. In other words, you know how, now look and see what happened. Capt. SMITH, upon being handed the activation papers, was slightly curious as to what facilities were to be made available for the use of the Squadron, but this curiosity was his property alone. No one seemed to have the slightest interest in the subject; so many a trek had to be made to the Night Fighter Division, which at last grudgingly hinted that desk space might be secured in an unused barracks built to house a contingent of WACs that were expected. If the WACs had arrived per schedule, life could have been complicated, although I daresay more interesting, but suffice it to say they failed to arrive and as the Squadron grew in personnel, additional WACs Barracks were borrowed to house our men. Those barracks, however, were so infested with bedbugs that every anti-bedding device known to science was employed to move the bedbugs out, with no success; so we decided to stage a strategic retreat leaving the barracks to the bedbugs and moving on 11 May to Signal Hill, another section of AAFSAT.



Commanding Officer, Capt. Carroll C. Smith (right), and his RO, F/O Phillip B. Porter (left). (Smith)

The officers present by this time, irrespective of their specialty or training, were scattered to the winds to secure essential items, such as desks, chairs, typewriters, paper, forms and transportation. Outside of the immediate need for clerical supplies, the big problem to overcome was transportation. The longer the Squadron operated, the more acute this problem became because there were trips to headquarters to make, supplies to pick up, plus hundreds of other needs. The official Machinery, however, failed to include vehicles, but 1st Lt. PAUL O'BRIEN, by army classification a controller, attached to the Squadron soon after its activation showed up one day with enough vehicles for two squadrons. To this day no one has had nerve enough to ask him how or where he acquired them. We were too relieved at first to care, and later, I guess too scared of what the answer would be. Still the trials and tribulations were not solved by the acquisition of vehicles. In effect, transportation only made it easier to get to headquarters to make the grand attempt to have men assigned who were qualified to do the technical work required to operate tactically. The order of the next appearance in the cast of characters, however, is of no particular significance nor the ones that followed, for in due time they will all be introduced as they come to the limelight in the activities of the 418th Night Fighter Squadron. As the First Sergeant manages to hold the limelight for some time, he accordingly must be introduced.

On 18 April, RUSSELL H. HUBBLE was assigned in the capacity of First Sergeant. He came to the Squadron with excellent recommendations, having been the Personnel Sergeant Major at the Boca Raton Air Base.

# Training

The main bulk of our activities in the next few months consisted of marches, calisthenics, intelligence lectures and other things which were to be of great value to us when we reached the combat theater; however, life was not always dull and drab; on 28 June a Squadron party was held at Bear Lake, Florida, the first by our Squadron, but by no means the last. The piece de resistance was spaghetti and meatballs, prepared by Sgt.WILLIAM CERVINO, 13152041, cook, and T/Sgt. ANTHONY P. TURSE, 13045448, Supply Sergeant, in true Italian fashion. The spaghetti was supplemented, if not supplanted, by a tasty and intoxicating concoction, vulgarly known as rum punch. As the merriment increased in tempo and the punch bowl decreased in quantity, somebody had the brilliant idea of throwing Capt. SMITH into the lake. Capt. SMITH by no means objected to this, took off his watch and gave it to S/Sgt. GEORGE L. BILLINGSLEY, JR., 6955886, to hold. Who should be next in the water but Sgt. BILLINGSLEY, holding the wallet and the watch. The ducking and drinking continued until all members of the Squadron had become thoroughly soaked, both within and without.

On 20 July, the Night Fighter Division, which was the mother organization of the night fighter squadrons at AAFSAT, was officially designated as the 481st Night Fighter Operational Training Group, organized to activate, train, and send overseas, tactical night fighter squadrons. The 418th has the distinction of being the first squadron to be sent overseas by this new group.

As our departure overseas drew nearer, we began on 28 July a more strenuous physical training program with frequent simulated gas attacks and long forced marches. One simulated gas attack in particular almost brought about the end of our Chemical Warfare Officer. Most of the flying personnel had been flying all night and as all night fighters do, were sleeping in the cool hours of the early morning to be awakened unceremoniously by a tear gas bomb which was dropped smack in the middle of the officers' area. This so aroused the ire of those sleeping that 2nd Lt. WALTER WEINBERG, O-860582,



# 418th Night Fighter Squadron at Kissimmee, Florida, September 18, 1943

(left third; note match mark near right end)



(Center third; note match marks near each end)



5

# Total personnel pictured: 225

# (right third; note match mark near left end)



was almost lynched on the spot.

On 21 August, the Squadron packed up its equipment and moved to Kissimmee, Florida– quite a trip—the sum total of twenty-five miles, where we were to continue our training. Capt. SMITH was continually in hot water because the flying personnel had a tendency to be buzz boys, and Col. YANCEY, Commandant of the Kissimmee Air Base, made many attempts to courtmartial many of our flying personnel. Other than their wild flying characteristics, these boys were not hard to keep tab on, for those who were married were always found at home with their wives and those who were single stayed extremely close to the post to evade irate fathers with shotguns.

Upon 1st Lt. JACK L. POWELL's promotion to Capt., he threw a very lavish party or brawl in the officers club at Kissimmee with lots of good Bourbon whiskey as the main dish and for dessert and hors d'oeuvres a little more Bourbon whiskey. Everyone conducted himself as a gentleman and proceeded to lead a very genteel evening, throwing each other through the windows, squirting each other with fire extinguishers, and in general creating chaos in that particular part of Florida.

# **Overseas Shipment**

n 22 September, 1st Lt. RONALD W. EHMKE O-574495, Statistical Officer, and T/Sgt. ANTHONY P. TURSE, 13045448, Supply Sergeant, departed with all the heavy equipment for Ft. Mason, California, where they were to gather equipment we did not have, load it aboard boats, and bring it to us in our theater of operations.

On 25 September, just as the train was pulling out of Kissimmee taking us to the Port of Embarkation at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, we were joined by a tired looking chap in a long lope with collars sticking out of his baggage, ties, socks and belts around his neck, and in his pockets, looking like a little burro with an oversize pack. This strange creature turned out to be none other than our inestimable Supply Officer, 2nd Lt. ROBERT A. WALTERS, O-570668, who had just been assigned to replace 2nd Lt. HENRY W. MATHEWSON, JR., O-578543, who had become ill with pneumonia.

On the next day we arrived at Camp Patrick Henry. The Squadron unloaded and lined up on the station platform while the "A" baggage and the "TAT" equipment were loaded on trucks. We then marched about one mile to the assigned barracks, five for the enlisted men and one for the officers. Throughout its stay at "Patrick Henry," the Squadron was identified by its shipment number 0445-C and by the APO number 4873, c/o PM, San Francisco, Calif. To the considerable disappointment of the Squadron, it was discovered that security regulations at Patrick Henry were unusually strict. We were not allowed to telephone or leave the camp area, and all outgoing mail and telegrams were subject to censorship. This disappointment was somewhat lessened by the entertainment facilities available at the camp itself and by the fact that answers could be received to telegrams sent out from camp. Of particular note was the exceptionally good choice of the latest movies. The principal Squadron work was the securing of last-minute supplies, making considerable paper and leg work for the Commanding Officer and the Supply Officer. We also received our yellow fever shots and a cursory physical examination. Throughout our stay, the only organized activities were daily calisthenics and occasional hikes.

On 6 October, the Squadron entrained at 0730 at Camp Patrick Henry for the seventeen mile trip to Hampton Roads, Port of Embarkation, and boarded the recently built troop transport, the U.S.S. General John Pope, of about 22,000 tons. It was cheering to the soldiers to see the Red Cross nurses pass out coffee to all on the docks before boarding the ship, while the band played on.

Our enlisted men were crowded into the bottom bow holds while the officers crowded into what staterooms there were available. Despite the crowded conditions, each man had a bunk. All day long a total of approximately 6,000 soldiers flowed onto the boat. At 1528 the ropes were cast off, and we commenced our voyage for a destination which was not revealed until the conclusion of the trip; however, we had a fair idea of the theater in which we would operate as soon as we passed through the Panama Canal. It was claimed that there was some confusion concerning the mines on the approach to the canal and for safety the ship circled three times about the bay before approaching the docks at Cristobal where we spent the night, principally loading peanuts and orange juice. We were allowed to mail letters from this port, but as was expected, no one was able to leave the ship.

Roland Fisher recalls the approach to San Juan, Puerto Rico: "As we were being guided into the harbor by a Navy corvette leading just ahead, it suddenly sounded frantic blasts from its horn and cut right across our bow from starboard to port. Our pilot went hard rudder and full reverse. The old POPE really shuddered. I later learned from one of the ship's officers that we narrowly missed one or more mines. From then on, there were rumors at every port that we nearly hit a mine."

On 11 October, at 0600, the U.S.S. General John Pope left the docks and headed through the Canal. The whole Squadron thoroughly enjoyed the trip up the three Gatun Locks, through Gatun Lake and down through the Miraflores Locks, through the Miraflores Lake to Balboa Harbor and the vast waters of the Pacific.

Another memorable event of our trip across the Pacific was the initiation of the Polliwogs by the Shellbacks upon crossing the Equator on 13 October. Although we never knew the exact time of the crossing, the celebration lasted three days. As we proceeded across the Pacific, it was estimated that our ship covered approximately five hundred miles a day. Clocks were retarded half an hour daily, but the big time jump occurred on 27 October when we crossed the International Date Line and put our clocks ahead twenty-four hours.

One of the greatest hardships was getting only two meals a day, which diet left the troops hungry twenty-four hours daily. Army and Navy relations were strained when the Navy men daily sat down to a third meal. Between meals the only Squadron activities were recognition classes given by Capt. EDWARD L. HOLSTEN, O-917344, our Intelligence Officer, in the enlisted men's mess, principally for the benefit of the newly acquired aerial gunners. The last two weeks of our trip, our Squadron furnished the M.P.s for the trip, each soldier serving four hours on and eight hours off, and our gunners were sufficiently trained in recognition for the Navy to employ them as aircraft and surface craft spotters during the period when the ship was passing through dangerous waters. Throughout the voyage the ship traveled without any convoy protection with the exception of an occasional Martin Mariner hovering overhead, since the Navy claimed that the speed of the ship and the considerable armament carried were sufficient protection.

On 29 October, we arrived at Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. We were all packed and planned to disembark, but to our surprise, word came to us to stay on the boat. The ship discharged some troops and Naval personnel at Brisbane, took on supplies and cast off again on 30 October. The next stop was at Townsville where we lay at anchor for a full day, apparently waiting for instructions. On 1 November,



Approximate route of the U.S.S. General John Pope, carrying the 418th Night Fighter Squadron, from the Hampton Roads Port of Embarkation to Milne Bay, New Guinea, 6 October 1943 to 2 November 1943. The Squadron moved from Milne Bay to Dobodura (landing at Oro Bay) on the S.S. Steinmetz, 21-22 November 1943. 9

we again hauled anchor and proceeded to Milne Bay [New Guinea], arriving 2 November. It was understood at this time that we were to proceed to Port Moresby, and accordingly on the night of 4 November, we transferred men and baggage to a Dutch ship, Carl Van Huestz where we soon learned what a comfortable ship the U.S.S. General John Pope had been. Our sleeping quarters consisted of a section of deck approximately four feet by six feet per person, where we unrolled our horseshoe packs and enjoyed the ocean breezes, despite the hard deck. It was at this time that we had our first taste of jungle rations, the cooking facilities of the ship being inadequate to take care of the troops aboard.

The Van Huestz was a Dutch vessel which prior to the war had been used for carrying cargo and passengers between Hong Kong and Shanghai. The crew outside of the commissioned officers



New Guinea is a large island in the Southwest Pacific. The western half was Dutch New Guinea and the eastern half was Northeast New Guinea in the north and Papua in the south. The 418th N.F.S.'s first contact in New Guinea, Milne Bay, and the first base, Dobodura, were in the Papua region. The first combat missions ranged along the coast of the Northeast region.

was entirely Javanese who proved to be a friendly and hospitable people and unselfish in sharing their beer. We never had a chance to discover how seaworthy or speedy the Van Huestz was because, despite rampant rumor of impending departure, we never did get out of the harbor.

While on the Van Huestz, the gambling members of our officer personnel got a liberal education in the act of dice throwing from a member of the 11th Reconnaissance Squadron and left the ship sadder and wiser for the experience.

On 6 November, after having spent two days and nights living under primitive and crowded conditions, we were relieved to receive an order to disembark. Landing barges drew alongside and loaded on men and baggage for the half-mile trip to shore. All A and B baggage was loaded on trucks and the men marched a distance of three miles to a clearing in the jungle which was pointed out to us as our camping site. The only development we found there was an unfinished skeleton which was to serve as the foundation of our mess hall. We immediately set upon solving the problem of pitching tents on four inches of mud. Despite the fact that we were forced to pioneer in a rather disagreeable section of jungle, the morale of the men was remarkably high, and all toiled with great gusto setting up tents, carting supplies and building a path of logs through the mud. Our first two meals necessarily consisted of jungle rations and coconuts and, consequently, when our mess was able to operate, our first hot meal was a big event.

# First Base Established at Dobodura, New Guinea

There was still a lot of confusion as to whether or not we were expected to stay at Milne Bay or proceed to Port Moresby as originally planned. In an effort to obtain information as to plans, Capt. SMITH, the Commanding Officer, flew to Port Moresby where he consulted with General WURTSMITH and learned that our destination was Dobodura, located about ten miles south of Oro Bay. Capt. SMITH contrived to borrow the General's P-38 to return to Milne Bay, and later on a trip

to Dobodura where he collected some interesting information on the night fighter situation and also arranged for our camp site. Several days later he returned to Milne Bay and selected an advance party headed by Capt. JACK L. POWELL, O-915655, Executive Officer, consisting of fifty enlisted men and six officers, which on 15 November left with machetes, axes, and equipment necessary to prepare the camping site for the main body of troops. Men and equipment were estimated to weigh approximately 20,000 pounds, and four C-47's were employed to transport them to Dobodura.

Word soon got back to Milne Bay via Lt. RICHARD C. FERRIS, O-460141, Pilot, who returned to advise the Commanding Officer of the situation at Dobodura, that on the night of their arrival the advance party was baptized with a Jap bombing raid which fortunately caused no casualties, despite the fact that the men received only eight minutes warning of the raid. The nearest bomb landed some four hundred yards from our site, but no damage or casualties resulted. On 21 November, the main body of the Squadron departed Milne Bay to join the advance party at Dobodura. The trip was made on the S.S. Steinmetz which landed at Oro Bay on the following day. From Oro Bay we were transported by trucks a distance of fifteen miles to Dobodura.

At Dobodura at this time, Detachment "A" of the 6th Night Fighter Squadron, based at Port Moresby, the first night fighter unit to come to New Guinea, was attached by order of the Fifth Fighter Command to this Squadron. No mention is made here of the personnel comprising the detachment, as a short time later the detachment was separated from us, part of it sent home and the remainder scattered among other organizations.

The 418th, not being a part of any group, operated tactically directly under the First Air Task Force, which also had its headquarters at Dobodura. Administratively, however, it came directly under Fifth Fighter Command, which originally had its headquarters at Port Moresby and in January 1944 moved to Nadzab.



418th Night Fighter Squadron camp site at Dobodura. (Liberatore)

Our Dobodura camp site was by far more comfortable than our camp at Milne Bay. The camp was located on top of a hill about one mile from the strip. A dayroom for the enlisted men and a club for the officers, both constructed native style, added much to the morale of the officers and men. It has been found, however, that the general morale of the Squadron seems to vary in direct proportion to the volume of missions we fly. We have had periods of several weeks duration during which most or all of our aircraft have been grounded, taking the men away from their regular jobs. During these inactive periods,

griping over inconsequential matters became very prevalent. Conversely, when we were flying daily missions and the air crews and ground personnel were kept busy at their regular duties, Squadron morale was at its highest. Movies held almost daily at the open air theater of our neighbor, 389th Service Squadron, livened our dull evenings as well.

On 23 November, our Commanding Officer, Capt. SMITH, received his Majority, which had been effective since 14 October 1943, and you may be sure that great merriment prevailed in camp that night.

# **Start of Combat Operations**

ur aircraft status from the time of our arrival at Dobodura to 1 February 1944 presents a varying picture. Our first aircraft were obtained from Detachment "A" and consisted of five P-70s and two P-38s, equipped as night fighters. The P-38 night fighters were the first of their kind ever to be constructed and were the painstaking work of Detachment "A". Lt. RICHARDSON and a radar mechanic received the Legion of Merit Award as a result of their work on these planes. The remainder of our seven other P-70s were picked up at various times at Brisbane and flown here by our pilots. The 10th Service Squadron supplied us with four P-38Js, one of which was subsequently lost in combat and in January 1944 the remaining P-38Js were taken from us to be replaced by four antiquated, battle-worn P-38Fs and P-38Gs from the 475th Fighter Group. One P-70 was lost in a crash landing at Townsville, caused by running out of gas. Another P-70 crashed into the water while on a training flight, which will be described more fully below. This left us at the beginning of February 1944 with a combat aircraft strength of ten P-70s and six P-38s. The P-70 lost on the training flight was piloted by 2nd Lt. HARRY B. CRUM, O-746053, who at the time was carrying as his passengers, Sgt. WILLIAM J. WINFURTHER, 13060134, an aerial gunner, and S/Sgt. ROY B. BISHOP, 34386071, crew chief of the aircraft. The accident occurred on 10 December 1943, and from the account of one of our pilots in the area at the time, it seems that Lt. CRUM was diving on a wreck off Buna on a practice gunnery mission when he mushed in, hit the water, caught a wing tip, cartwheeled over and immediately sank, killing all three. Their bodies were recovered several days later, and they were buried with full military honors.

The P-38 was lost on a combat mission to Hansa Bay and was piloted by 2nd Lt. WILLIAM R. CARRIGER, O-743408, one of the pilots who joined our organization after our arrival here. On 16 January, Lt. CARRIGER was flying wing man for Lt. FERRIS on a strafing dive on ack-ack positions when apparently he was caught in Lt. FERRIS' prop wash, stalled, hit the ground and burst into flames.

Around the middle of December 1943, several new pilots and ROs (Radar Observers) were assigned to us, having been flown over as casuals from the States. They were 2nd Lt. IRA M. BARNETT, 2nd Lt. WILLIAM R. CARRIGER, 2nd Lt. ROBERT M. FORRESTALL, 2nd Lt. WILLIAM A. FOSTER, 2nd Lt. PAUL F. HARRINGTON, 2nd Lt. LINN W. LEDFORD, F/O WARREN EASTWICK, F/O WALTER FRADIN, F/O HARRY D. HOLLEY, F/O ARVEL M. LAKE, F/O CHESTER L. PATRICK, and F/O THOMAS R. WRIGHT.

Our missions up to this time consisted of maintaining night alerts and patrols at Dobodura, Port Moresby, Kiriwina Island, and Finschhafen which all resulted in nil sightings. In addition, we were assigned several early morning P-38 missions, on the first of which four of our P-38s were assigned to cover the convoy which landed at Saidor on 2 January 1944. We staged from Finschhafen and flew over the patrol area from 0600/L to 0815/L. The landings proceeded smoothly without enemy opposition, and consequently our first mission was uneventful.

It was not until 13 January 1944 that we broke the ice and destroyed a Val. On this mission our Commanding Officer, Major CARROLL C. SMITH, and one wing man in P-38s were on a fighter sweep of Madang and Alexishafen, when the Major brought down an enemy dive bomber over the Alexishafen strip while flying at four hundred feet.

Our next fruitful mission occurred on 14 January 1944, when two of our P-38s scored direct hits on a one-hundred foot, two-masted Jap ship near Palas Point. On this mission the P-38s also strafed a small camp of Jap soldiers, causing personnel casualties, a camouflaged native canoe, and the Number Two Strip at Alexishafen. This latter strafing resulted in the destruction of one Sally and the probable damage of eight or nine two-engine bombers.

On 22 January 1944, our P-38s piloted by Lt. FERRIS and Lt. CRAIG on a mission to Hansa Bay sank a Sugar Charlie off Condor Point, strafed the crew which attempted to escape in a lifeboat, and later strafed a wooden barge as it was discharging passengers. It is believed that about thirty Nips were killed on this mission.



1st Lt.Roland T. Fisher, the first Operations Officer in the 418th NFS, standing by a P-70. (Fisher)

The original history omits the roll of 1st Lt. ROLAND T. FISHER, O-885680. Lt. FISHER is among several night fighter pilots who had served in England with the Royal Air Force and the U.S. Eighth Air Force, who were transferred to Orlando, Florida, to help form the U.S. night fighter capability. Lt. FISHER was transferred (then a 2nd Lt.) by orders dated 6 March 1943, and began helping Capt. CARROLL C. SMITH in May 1943 in putting together the 418th Night Fighter Squadron, which had been activated on 1 April 1943. Lt. FISHER went overseas on the U.S.S. General Pope as Operations Officer and served with the Squadron for the first months in New Guinea, until January 1944, when the 5th Bomber Command transferred him to the 63rd Bomb Squadron, which had B-24s newly equipped with radar for night snooper operations.





The Pacific Ocean area of operations.

(Adapted from Pape and extended)

# 2. Ack-Ack Trouble February 1944

P-70 Night Fighter (Pape)

During the month of January and the early month of February, we encountered a great deal of trouble with our own ack-ack, particularly at Finschhafen, which over a period of time severely damaged one P-38, piloted by 1st Lt. FRANK GUNNER YOUNG, O-743558, was responsible for the crash landing and destruction of another, piloted by 1st Lt. RICHARD C. FERRIS who escaped uninjured, and scored direct hits upon one P-70, carrying 1st Lt. HAROLD B. WHITTERN, O-740320, Pilot, 2nd Lt. BUNYAN A. CRAIN, JR., O-888869, Radar Observer and Capt. EDWARD L. HOLSTEN, Intelligence Officer. Our Commanding Officer, Major SMITH, made an investigation, and it was found that the lack of coordination at Finschhafen was due to the combination of carelessness and inexperience on the part of Finschhafen Controllers. To remedy this situation, an experienced Controller, Capt. O'BRIEN, who at one time was a member of this organization back in the States, was sent to Finschhafen and the difficulty cleared up, as far as land ack-ack and searchlight batteries were concerned. Fortunately, no injuries to personnel resulted.

Pilot's compartment in a P-70 (Pape)



# 3. Move to Finschhafen, New Guinea March 1944

On 5 March, Lt. EDWARD CRAIG, O-743420, pilot, flying a P-38 mission to the Admiralty Islands failed to return. It is thought that he crashed somewhere in the Bismark Sea. His wingman, Lt. ROBERT M. FORRESTAL, crash landed at Gloucester on this same mission. It is believed that the accident was caused by over-stretching the time over the target, resulting in the aircraft running out of gas.

On 15 March, the Squadron received orders directing it to move to Finschhafen. An advance party composed of 1st Lt. NORBERT J. DeBOER, O-574380, Adjutant, and forty enlisted men made the trip from Dobodura to Finschhafen via boat. Meanwhile, the main body of troops packed the Squadron equipment, tore down the buildings, and on 28 March, at 0600, took off in C-47s for Finschhafen and landed at 0700, whereupon we immediately set up camp and commenced operations.

Finschhafen, in Northeast New Guinea, was taken by Australians from the Japs on 2 October, 1943.



A P-38, from Fifth Air Force "Pacific Sweep." This particular aircraft was not with the 418th NFS, and is not equipped for night fighting.

# 4. At Finschhafen, New Guinea April 1944

In the month of April, we got off to a bad start with the loss on the second day of 2nd Lt. ROBERT M. FORRESTAL, O-746073, Pilot, and his Observer, F/O HARRY D. HOLLEY, T-180073. They were on a mission to Hansa Bay to drop supplies to an Australian patrol and propaganda leaflets to the natives. These boys had been in the Squadron approximately six months and had become wellknown and well-liked by all the members of the Squadron. It might be of interest to note the fact that Lt. FORRESTAL was the third cousin of the present Secretary of the Navy, JAMES F. FORRESTAL.

No word has been received as to what their fate might have been. We suspect weather played a large part, or possibly a crash in the mountains accounted for their failure to return.

To add to our tough luck, lst Lt. RICHARD B. FERRIS, O-460141, on 9 April 1944, while test-hopping in a P-47, took off from the strip at Finschhafen, and after reaching an altitude of 500 feet, the aircraft exploded and crashed in Langemak Bay, taking the life of Lt. FERRIS. Upon the explosion, FERRIS rolled the airplane on its back and attempted to bail out. Operations during April 1944 were along the coast of Northeast New Guinea.

When the plane was about thirty feet off the water, he was seen to leave the ship and be buffeted about on the tail section of the airplane, leaving his body badly mutilated. Fortunately the Navy was about, and his body was recovered almost instantaneously. He lived for one minute after rescue. Lt. FERRIS was Flight Commander and was one of the most popular men in the Squadron. He was a native of Nyack, New York, and a graduate of New York University. Up until the time of his death, he had been one of the most successful members of our Squadron in his contacts with the Nips, having helped sink a Sugar Charlie and also having destroyed many aircraft on the ground. He was a member of the Caterpillar Club, having had his aircraft shot from under him while covering the landing at Manus Island, when he successfully bailed out and was picked up by the Navy. He was buried with full military honors on 11 April 1944 at the cemetery at Finschhafen.

From 1 April to 13 April, our action against the enemy consisted of uneventful night fighter patrols around Cape Croisilles and Kar Kar Island. These were accomplished by staging our aircraft at Saidor and involved the active participation of all flying personnel of the Squadron. On 13 April, we began night intruder work with the pilots, 2nd Lt. PAUL F. HARRINGTON, O-746100, and 1st Lt. GILBERT P. EISSMAN, O-740147, handling the first two missions. These missions were to Hansa Bay and around Alexishafen. These were not the first missions of this type that we have had; however, it was the first for this month, being the first night of the full moon. The missions were uneventful, resulting in the strafing of enemy installation anti-aircraft positions and barge landings.

At this time, it might be well to explain to the average outsider the objective of intruder work. Intruder work was started in England and proved highly successful there. It deals with the night fighters staying aloft over enemy dromes, waiting for the return of their bombers, and also the strafing and harassing of the enemy troops at night. Being strafed in the daytime is quite a sensation in itself, but being strafed at night is the most horrifying and nerve-wracking experience that could possibly happen to anyone. Were it not for the fact that we still remember the enemy at Pearl Harbor and his other treacherous deeds,

one could have a sense of pity even for the Nip. In pursuit of this type of work, 1st Lt. GILBERT P. EISSMAN, O-740147, not being satisfied with his usual bomb load of four 250-pound bombs, had his Observer, F/O WALTER FRADEN, T-180019, load the rear cockpit of the P-70 with six 20-pound fragmentation bombs which he fused by hand and passed to S/Sgt. GEORGE L. DeHAVEN, JR., 12168355, Aerial Gunner, who dropped them at the command of Lt. EISSMAN when luscious targets were spotted. This proved quite successful in addition to being great sport, and was adopted by all crew members of the organization. We do not advise this, however, for general practice, because fusing bombs by hand is not conducive to long life.

Continuing our night intruder work, fate again frowned on us, in that 1st Lt. ALBERT H. SORBO, O-740296, while taking off from the strip at Saidor had an engine cut out on his P-70 and was forced to lift the landing gear and crash land, losing another of our all too precious aircraft. Dame Fortune, however, smiled, and Lt. SORBO with his crew, 2nd Lt. GEORGE N. KERSTETTER, O-888900, Radar Observer, and S/Sgt. JAMES E. BROBERG, 33247921, Aerial Gunner, escaped without injury, to the great relief of everyone. The condition of these men after the crash was something terrific, because they were carrying a bombload, and upon the crash landing of the plane, the guts of the fuselage were practically worn away by the coral and metal landing strip. Lt. KERSTETTER proved his mettle by being able to light his own cigarette fifteen minutes later.

Capt. EDWARD L. HOLSTEN, O-917344, our Intelligence Officer, a New York financier in civilian life, held weekly sessions of a "War College," explaining to the men of our Squadron the war situations and tactical moves that have been made by our General Staffs. These were most welcome and a very decided interest was divulged by all members of the Squadron. Capt. HOLSTEN did not limit himself to just the news; he explained why our generals had made various moves and the advantages gained by making such moves. In addition to all of these other things, Capt. HOLSTEN gave a general picture of the strategy to be used, and at such times, when fact failed him, he relied upon inspiration. Educational films dealing with radar, the operations and maintenance thereof were shown in our mess hall, coordinated with recognition classes which were not compulsory, but enjoyed one-hundred percent attendance.

Our Motor Pool, which has proved to be a worthy part of our outfit, one bright April day, decided our vehicles needed a new paint job. Cpl. ROBERT P. HEYDT, 33370980, was borrowed from the Dispensary to accomplish this painting. Cpl. HEYDT is an ambulance driver and in civilian life is the owner of a very high-powered racing car. The performance that he turned in with his spray gun has yet to be equaled in this Squadron as far as painting is concerned. In addition to painting the vehicles, a thorough overhaul was made of each vehicle as it came off the paint rack, and at present our vehicles are in A-1 condition.

And now we come to the lighter side. On 17 April 1944, the first furloughs for this Squadron since its entrance into the Southwest Pacific Theater began with T/Sgt. O. M. SOLOMON, 6956215, being the lucky lad to make the first trip to Mackay, Australia, Army Leave Center. This proved to be quite a boost to the morale of the enlisted men who had little and limited recreational facilities. In line with recreational facilities, a unique system had been inaugurated for "gypping" the Red Cross out of coffee and doughnuts. The Operations Section, no one particularly outstanding, had once called the Red Cross

to furnish refreshments for combat crews returning from missions. It worked so well that even though we had no combat crews returning from missions, yet with an unquenchable desire for coffee and doughnuts, we called the ladies over every day.

Our food at this time was slightly terrific, consisting wholly of bully beef and canned salmon, commonly referred to as corned willy and goldfish; so you can readily see that the coffee and doughnuts from the Red Cross were more than welcome. This, however, was not the only supply of food that we had. A few of our Squadron diplomats solidified relationships with the Navy and "acquired" many gifts of foodstuffs which greatly supplemented our diet. I think it would be well at this time to mention that 1st Lt. IRA M. BARNETT, O-446022, was the most outstanding of our so-called diplomats in that he achieved greater success. We acquired four new iceboxes, and although we had a limited amount to put in them, they were very appealing to the eye. One of these iceboxes was immediately confiscated by Troop 29, an affectionate term applied to the four big wheels of the Squadron: Major CARROLL C. SMITH, O-418144, Commanding Officer, Capt. EDWARD L. HOLSTEN, O-917344, Intelligence Officer, Capt. JACK L. POWELL, O-915655, Executive Officer; and Capt. ROWLAND H. ROBERTSON, JR., O-482794, Flight Surgeon. To add to our many joys, we had a stove in the mess hall which was very temperamental and blew up many times. This same stove one day caught the mess hall afire, whereupon the heroism of our Adjutant, 1st Lt. NORBERT J. DeBOER, O-574380, came to the surface as he dashed madly up the framework to tear away the burning burlap. Many attempts with many fire extinguishers, none of which worked, failed to quench the flames. Because of the quality of our food, many of our boys were cheering the flames rather than the attempts to extinguish them.

Movies at Finschhafen took on a rather comical aspect with our Special Services Officer, 1st. Lt. HENRY SALTONSTALL HOWE, O-372080, cousin of the present Governor of Massachusetts, making many grandiose attempts at showing movies with a projector that never seemed to work, and we were constantly in doubt, because we were left in the middle of the movie, as to whether the hero got the beautiful heroine and the villain was given just retribution, but upon one occasion precedent was broken and the projector worked, at which time we were shown movies made of our Squadron picnic at Bear Lake in Orlando, Florida. This brought back many memories to our boys because quite a lot of horseplay had taken place at this picnic, resulting in the ducking of all members of the Squadron with our Commanding Officer, Major SMITH, heading the list.

Our athletic program consisted of baseball which was sparkplugged by F/O KENNETH P. RITTER, T-192538, Radar Observer, who was quite a prominent baseball player in the minor leagues in the States. A little world series was held between the pilots and the observers, with the pilots winning four games and the observers winning three. The fact that the series went seven games proved that it was a nip-and-tuck contest all the way. The baseball season was climaxed by a game between the enlisted men and the officers, in which the officers took an unmerciful beating with the resulting score of twenty to five in favor of the enlisted men. A volleyball court was set up and each evening after dinner many teams of the various sections competed with each other. The final play-offs were never held, but the recreational value was of great importance.

Mother Walters' Tea Room, sole proprietor, 1st Lt. ROBERT A. WALTERS, O-570668, Supply Officer, proved to be a valuable asset to the social life of the officers. Every evening after dark, the officers of the Squadron congregated in Lt. WALTERs' tent, drank his tea, ate his food from home, smoked his cigarettes and bored him terrifically by talking about politics and other things of which we

had no knowledge whatsoever. The bull sessions did much toward incorporating into our brotherhood the new replacements who had joined our Squadron a month or so prior. Among the many things discussed besides women were airplanes, strategy, radar equipment, philosophies of life, religion, and other things which served to broaden each other's ideas and opinions. Lt. WALTERS was given a piece of cheese by one of the boys who came back from leave in Sydney; this same piece of cheese measured approximately two inches square, but Lt. WALTERS, being a connoisseur of good cheeses, figured out 9,000,000 different dishes that he was going to make out of the one piece of cheese. Never before in the history of the Squadron has as much ecstasy been shown as did Lt. WALTERS when he saw the cheese.

Two of our enlisted men with the same feeling that Stanley had when he looked for Livingstone set forth on a trek into the jungles. These two boys, Sgt. THOMAS D. MILLER, 38366029, painter, and Cpl. WILLIAM D. THORNE, 12172739, carpenter, were looking for souvenirs. After passing many busy hours, they suddenly discovered that darkness was upon them, and to their amazement, amusement, and chagrin, they likewise discovered that they were lost. After many fruitless attempts to orient themselves, they decided to give it up as a bad job and to spend the night in the jungle. Fear of the unknown forced them to take a very cautious outlook on the situation; so in order to safeguard themselves, against denizens of the underbrush, they spent a most uncomfortable night on a rock in the middle of a stream and at daybreak made their way back to camp, two tired and disgusted little boys.



1st Lt. Leon O. ("Toby") Gunn, entering P-70. (photo at Kissimmee, FL, 1943-Fisher)

Among the many things that have been discovered in New Guinea, the one of 1st Lt. LEON O. GUNN, O-885480, Operations Officer, and 2nd Lt. FRANK M. DUBASIK, O-888872, Radar Observer, is probably by far the most spectacular since the Garden of Eden. Alter several bottles of Hock, Burgundy, and stronger intoxicants, the idea of a mud bath for health's sake started and resulted in the dunking of all the officers of the Squadron in a very convenient mud hole. So highly recommended were the mud baths that even a visiting officer, lst. Lt. WALTER A. WEINBERG, O-860582, formerly of our Squadron, enjoyed two such baths in succession. Major SMITH was having dinner with Navy friends and did not return until midnight. In the meantime, a constant vigil was kept for him with no success; however, we feel that there is something lacking in Major SMITH'S life that will be remedied in due time.
## 5. Move to Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea May 1944

First Lt. MERWIN E. LYALL, O-1574965, joined our Squadron on 1 May 1944 to serve in the capacity of Ordnance Officer (per Para. 9, Special Orders #124, Headquarters, Fifth Fighter Command, 3 May 1944). He replaces lst Lt. EMANUEL BROOKMYER, O-1554142, who had been assigned to the 81st Air Depot Group. Lt. LYALL was born on a farm down in Iowa where he lived the better part of his early life; however, he developed an urge for the bright lights and moved into Des Moines, Iowa, taking a job at Armour Packing Co. He held this job until he received that well-known epistle which begins, "Greetings." He is a very welcome addition to the Squadron and has already made many friends.

On that some day, 1 May, we welcomed into our Squadron a new combat crew, 2nd Lt. HENRY W. INGWERSEN, JR., O-750600, Pilot, and F/O JOHN R. JONES, JR., T-192952, Radar Observer. They had been assigned as of 26 April 1944 (per Para. 2, Special Orders # 120, Fifth Fighter Command, 29 April 1944); but due to transportation difficulties were unable to join us until this date. Lt. INGWERSEN a native of Flossmoor, Illinois, was up until the time he felt a patriotic urge, a medical student at the University of Chicago. He has a very likeable personality and will take the pro or con of any argument. F/O JONES, affectionately referred to as "Gopher," has the distinction of being one of the few of the Squadron's small group of Boston bluenoses. A great toast was held for them on the evening of their arrival. The main dish, of course, was most delicious bully beef.

On 4 May 1944, we received notification of a posthumous award of the Air Medal to 1st Lt. RICHARD B. FERRIS, JR., O-460141 (per General Orders #273, Headquarters, Fifth Air Force, dated 4 May 1944). The reason for this award was the sinking of a SUGAR CHARLIE, previously mentioned in detail in the January Chapter of this history. 1st Lt. EDWARD E. CRAIG, O-743420, missing in action since 4 March 1944, on a mission to Manus Island, likewise was awarded the Air Medal by the same General Orders for the same sinking. Out of a clear blue sky came a very dark cloud: Movement Order # 282, Headquarters, Advance Echelon, Fifth Air Force, APO 713, Unit 1, dated 12 May 1944. Although we were anxiously awaiting movement and looking forward to our new base, it was very trying to tear ourselves away from our dear little home in Finschhafen (confidentially, we were glad to get out of that hole). Everybody pitched in, and after working long and strenuous hours, we succeeded in loading our equipment on LST #463 on 9 May. The LST dock at Finschhafen is an experience in itself. The mud, as usual, was knee-deep, and it rained constantly during the loading; yet there were no complaints from anyone, and we were loaded well ahead of schedule.

Our trip, some 435 miles, lasted four days and nights and was most enjoyable from the viewpoint of relaxation, scenery and sunbaths; however, the quarters and food of the enlisted men were rather trying. For food, they were issued Army jungle rations, which are impossible to eat, let alone digest. For sleeping quarters, because there was not enough room in the ship's quarters, the major portions of the men were forced to sleep on the top of trucks, in jeeps, ambulances, or on the cold steel deck of the LST. The sick and ailing and a few of the higher ranking non-coms, along with the officers, were allowed a canvas cot, well-known to those being guests of the Navy on sea trips. The officers of our Squadron were a little more fortunate along the line of food and were allowed to eat in the Navy officers mess aboard

ship. Although the food was not particularly outstanding, it was far better than the enlisted men had. Our fellow passengers proved to be quite a lecherous and unscrupulous bunch by appropriating many items of personal equipment of both our officers and enlisted men; however, retaliation was had in that our officers gave their officers a very liberal education in the art of playing poker, in which I might add, we are unsurpassed.

At 0500, 11 May 1944, we were awakened and told to be ready to disembark; our destination, Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea, had been reached. We were not very favorably impressed with the terrain which confronted us, because the Navy, bless their hearts, had done a very efficient job of shelling the beach on D-day, 22 April, and our landing was D plus 20. The beach looked like the wreck of the "Hesperus." The tops of all the beautiful palms had been blown away; likewise, the various surrounding hills, which were ordinarily green and beautiful, were shell-pitted and smoke blackened.

The landing of the equipment at Humboldt Bay proved to be quite a chore because of the terrific confusion on the beach, soft sand and lack of roads, in addition to the many pompous individuals who were trying to conduct the unloading. However, starting at 0830, the job was completed by 1900. To say the job was completed, actually, is a gross misstatement; it had only begun. From Humboldt Bay to our camp area, a distance of some twenty-four miles, it took twenty-six hours to complete the trip. The road was deeply rutted by heavy vehicles passing in ahead of us and in many stretches had one-way traffic, having been built around the side of a mountain. It is hard to conceive how the Japanese could have moved as much heavy equipment into Hollandia with the roads which they had. This trek, which we have been discussing, served a very evil purpose because all of our vehicles ten days prior had been in A-1 condition and now were practically in shambles, having burned out about a half-dozen clutches, burning the piston rods out of one truck, and completely wrecking another truck. Two other trucks turned over, but escaped with minor damages. Again we lift our hats to the Motor Pool, for within one week after our arrival here, practically all of the vehicles were again in running condition.

First Lt. HENRY S. HOWE, O-572080, Radar Officer, started to take a number of the enlisted men who were unable to ride our vehicles to march them to our camp area near Hollandia Drome. After two days of very trying experiences, they arrived at Hollandia Strip at about 2300 hours, and it being dark, and they, having no idea of the location of the camp, were forced to take refuge in an abandoned Jap building alongside the strip. They laid their tired and worn bodies down for what they thought a peaceful night, but to their surprise they were very rudely awakened at 0500 by the thunderous roar of bursting bombs. After the raid was over, they found to their comfort or discomfort that the Jap bombs had very neatly bracketed them three hundred yards on either side. In the meantime, 1st Lt. RONALD H. EHMKE, O-574495, Statistical Officer and worrybird of the Squadron, had been left on the beach with the rest of our equipment and men, and they too were undergoing a novel experience. The Nip bomber laid her eggs on a gas dump nearby where Lt. EHMKE and the men were bivouaced. It is significant to note that prior to the raid our men had no foxholes, but five minutes afterwards a very elaborate collection of same had been installed around our bivouac area. The next day Lt. EHMKE, in an attempt to get the men off the beach to where they would be much safer, asked that they be taken to the camp area and that he be left alone on the beach guarding the equipment.

Our camp site which was assigned to us by the area engineers is by far the most beautiful of any camp site in or around Hollandia Air Base. It sits on a hill overlooking Hollandia Strip and Sentani Lake, being up high enough to be out of the dust which is very obnoxious here at Hollandia. We had been told that



418th NFS Camp at Hollandia. (Smith)

our stay at Hollandia was to be of a very temporary nature, and our camp site was not improved upon until much later.

When we left Finschhafen, we left ten members of our flying personnel there under the command of newly promoted Capt. LEON O. GUNN, O-885480, Operations Officer, to ferry the aircraft up to Hollandia; however, circumstances intervened and they were sent to Port Moresby instead by verbal order of the Commanding General, Fifth Fighter Command, to transfer our few remaining aircraft to the Fifth Fighter Replacement Pool and to remain there to undergo transitional flying in B-25Hs preparatory for night intruder work. This came as quite a surprise to us as 1st Lt. MILLARD F. HALL, O-860502, Engineering Officer, with twelve enlisted men on authority of Para. 7, Special Orders #127, Headquarters, Fifth Fighter Command, dated 6 May 1944, had previously been sent to Brisbane, Australia, to assemble P-61s, the new twin-engine Night Fighter. The remainder of the flying personnel, other than those who had stayed at Finschhafen, along with 1st Lt. MERWIN B. LYALL, O-1574965, Ordnance Officer, and thirty-eight enlisted men were also sent to Port Moresby to undergo this transitional training, on authority of Teletype Communication M 315 E, from Headquarters, Fifth Fighter Command, to 310th Bomb Wing, dated 13 May 1944. Discovering in the meantime that the B-25s were to be permanently used instead of the P-61s, Lt. HALL and his twelve men were recalled from Brisbane to Port Moresby.

On 26 May 1944, we lost our First Sergeant to O.C.S. On 15 May, Special Orders #156, Headquarters, Fifth Air Force, were cut, taking from our organization two very fine men: 1st Sgt. RUSSELL H. HUBBLE, 16006951, and Sgt. HALFORD S. WRIGHT, JR., 34406702, Radio Mechanic. Although we shall miss those men, we are proud to see them making a step in the right direction and wish them continued success in their new field of endeavor. Sgt. HUBBLE was one of those fabulous characters often portrayed by the author Zane Grey, having spent most of his life on a cattle ranch in Montana. Sgt. HUBBLE often laid down an S.O.P. for the correct way to ride a young burro. He says that you must have the burro's ears in your teeth, tie your legs underneath, and exercise your vocabulary. Sgt. WRIGHT was a very quiet, modest, conscientious little boy with many friends. To them we say, Bon Voyage!

On 16 May, Major CARROLL C. SMITH, O-418144, our Commanding Officer, was awarded the Air Medal for the destruction of an enemy dive-bomber over Alexishafen on 13 January 1944 (General Orders #307, Headquarters, Fifth Air Force, dated 16 May 1944). We received correspondence (General Orders #264, Headquarters, Fifth Air Force, dated 29 April 1944) about the same time that we received notification of the award which gave Major SMITH official credit for the destruction of the divebomber.

In the meantime, back at Hollandia, those men who had been left there were enjoying a continued state of relaxation. They set up a football gridiron, horseshoe, basketball, volleyball and badminton courts, and spent practically each entire day participating in these various sports, becoming very healthy, hard and brown. Capt. ROWLAND H. ROBERTSON, JR., O-482794, Squadron Medical Officer, rarely had a case of any type of sickness, although he painted many bruises and abrasions. So healthy were the men that Capt. ROBERTSON was officially acclaimed the champion sacktime artist.

However, all was not peace and quiet in our little camp in Hollandia because one night we were paid a visit by a representative of the little sons-of-Nippon. This Jap who had been attracted by the smell of frying bacon ventured into the tent of the Motor Pool to have a bite of dinner with them. Suddenly pandemonium ruled as everyone grabbed for his gun, and the Jap, feeling the part of the uninvited guest, grabbed the food and beat a hasty retreat. At this moment, one might have thought the 418th Night Fighter Squadron was a heavy weapons company of field artillery from the barrage that was laid down. After this intrusion into our happy home, a double guard was posted, and our Adjutant, 1st Lt. NORBERT J. DeBOER, O-574380, who inwardly has a desire to be a great general, set up a perimeter of defense, the equal of which has yet to be seen. He mounted machine guns on jeeps and divided the men into four platoons, stationing these platoons on the four cardinal points of the compass just outside the camp area with his armored forces, being the jeeps, of course, stationed in the middle of the perimeter ready to reinforce any flank. Although we have a tendency to make light of Lt.



Messhall at Hollandia. (Smith)



Aircraft maintenance, Hollandia. (Smith)

DeBOER's plan, it really was a very adaptable piece of strategy and tactics in case we were attacked.

## 6. First Missions with B-25s June 1944

t Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea), 1 June 1944, a new combat crew, 2nd Lt. ROBERT A. McMASTER, O-749570, Pilot, and F/O HOMER F. MOSELEY, JR., T-192888, Radar Observer, were assigned to our organization (per Para.6, Special Orders #148, Headquarters, Fifth Fighter Command, dated 27 May 1944). Lt. McMASTER, a native of Syracuse, New York, is a roly-poly little lad with a cherubic face which hides a brilliant mind. Prior to his entrance into the Army, he was a furniture inspector. We have not found out as yet just what he inspected; however, we suspect that he had all the termites at attention. His Observer, F/O MOSELY, is one of the boys from dear old Flatbush, one of "de original bums." He studied accounting at St. John's University and before entering the army was an accountant for J.C. Penney Co.

Second Lt. GEORGE W. HOPES, O-873261, our Weather Officer, enroute to rejoin our organization from the hospital at Finschhafen, received Special Orders #159, pp. 13, Headquarters, Advance Echelon, Fifth Air Force, dated 7 June 1944, transferring him to the 15th Weather Squadron, APO 922. The reason for his transfer was due to the theater policy of having a weather unit rather than an individual Squadron weather officer to forecast the weather for an area; however, we hear from very authoritative sources that Lt. HOPES has been transferred to the good old U.S.A. because he was unable to stand this climate. Lt. HOPES, a native of Hubbard, Ohio, was a round, pudgy little fellow, very serious about his work, but he took an unmerciful kidding from the other officers in the Squadron when his weather failed to pan out as scheduled.

On 10 June, we were again blessed by the Personnel Section of Fifth Fighter Command with two new combat crews, 2nd Lt. MARVIN H. DENNIS, O-750553, Pilot, and 2nd Lt. DALE F. MILLER, O-750657, Pilot, and their Observers, F/O CLEWLEY W. STEVENS, T-192939, and F/O WILLIAM R. RITCHEY, T-192135 (on authority of Para.1, Special Orders #157, Headquarters Fifth Fighter Command, dated 5 June 1944). Lt. DENNIS hails from Spokane, Washington, and has spent a couple of years as a brakeman on the Northern Pacific Railroad. We have heard many stories all our lives about the, shall we say, abilities of the railroad man, and we suspect that Lt. DENNIS lives up to the full tradition. F/O STEVENS, Lt. MILLER's Observer, likewise hails from Spokane, Washington. He spent much of his time in the newspaper racket. We do not know exactly in what capacity he served, whether he sold them on street corners or edited, but we are sure that it was a job well done. We have his word for that. Lt. MILLER is a Hoosier from Indiana, Logansport to be exact, and after studying in a defense school, worked for Allison Aircraft Engines before entering the Army. F/O RITCHEY, who immediately made himself a place in our Squadron with his ready laugh and equally ready sense of humor, has been affectionately nicknamed "Alice the Goon." He is from Chicago, Illinois, and was studying medicine before duty called him at the University of Oklahoma. Since he has been over here, he has developed a paranoid complex toward mosquitoes, and says they like his blood better than any type they have found in the Southwest Pacific.

Second Lt. JOHN J. GILBEAU, O-868203, was assigned (per Para. 6, Special Orders #172, Headquarters, Fifth Fighter Command, dated 20 June 1944) as Armament Officer, replacing 1st Lt. WALTER L. WEINBERG, O-860582, who was transferred out in February of this year. Lt. GILBEAU,

from Lodi, California, took up engineering at Stockton Junior College, then afterwards worked for the Moore Equipment Co., which makes bulldozers and landing craft. He was quite enthused about being in a combat zone, and we pray that he will not lose that enthusiasm because over here, brother you need it.

The trumpet sounds, everybody rushes for his warhorse, the day has arrived, or rather the night has arrived for our first mission with B-25s. On 8 June 1944, Major CARROLL C. SMITH, O-413144, our Commanding Officer, with three other combat crews beside his own went to Wakde Island, preparatory

to running night harassing raids on the airdromes in and around Geelvink Bay. We were operating under the detachment of the 310th Bomb Wing at Wakde, and we would like to take our hats off to them for their excellent cooperation which surpassed any that we have had in this theater. Our first mission was to be a strike against Babo Airdrome with Major SMITH and his crew, 2nd Lt. PHILIP B. PORTER, O-888876, Navigator-Observer, T/Sgt. ROBERT E. GORMAN, 6937149, Radio Operator, and T/Sgt. MICHAEL A. CAPITTI, 32324345, Rear Gunner. Major SMITH and his crew

The B-25, a twin engine medium bomber, had the same 66-ft wingspan as the P-61, coming later in September 1944.

succeeded in reaching the target and expended about 6,900 rounds of ammunition in strafing and nine 100-pound parademos. Capt. LEON O. GUNN, O-885480, who was to run the next shift (these missions were run in shifts in order to keep the Nip awake all night) was not quite so successful, and because of bad weather was forced to turn back; however, his mission was not totally without color because Sgt. MIGUEL J. APODACA, 39277487, his Tail Gunner, fired sixty rounds of ammunition at a twin-engine silver plane near Japen Island, which failed to identity itself. However, the plane immediately took violent evasive action and contact was lost so that any results were not observed. 1st Lt. RICHARD F. DAY, O-885216, and his crew, 2nd Lt. ELWOOD H. GARDNER, O-888979, Navigator Observer; S/Sgt. GEORGE L. DE HAVEN, JR., 12168355, Aerial Gunner; and Sgt. LEONARD S. RUNTON, 33169723, Radio Operator, taking off in the wee hours of the morning, fared much better and were able to get over the target, bombing and strafing. In the meantime, Capt. GUNN had returned with his full bomb load and parked his shiny new airplane in between Major SMITH's plane and that of 1st Lt. HAROLD B. WHITTERN, O-740320. All was relatively quiet and peaceful until 0400 when pandemonium ruled with a Nip bomber very carefully laying his eggs along the Wakde Strip. Of all the airplanes to hit with his first bomb, the Nip made a bullseye on Capt. GUNN's bombloaded airplane with an oil incendiary bomb. As a consequence, within the next five minutes Major SMITH's airplane burned to the ground along with Capt. GUNN's. Lt. WHITTERN's B-25 had the tail section burned away and was so full of holes from the flying debris of Capt. GUNN's aircraft that it would not hold a drop of water. We found from later Intelligence Reports that our raids on Babo had proved almost as fruitful as the one the Nips had made on Wakde, in that we had destroyed approximately fourteen aircraft at Babo Drome to the Nip's eighteen at Wakde. It might be significant to mention at this time that the airplanes which we lost at Wakde had not yet been assigned to us and were still the property of the bomber replacement pool at Port Moresby.

Lt. DAY and crew had the good fortune of being off Wakde about twenty miles while the raid was in progress, and I quote Lt. DAY saying, "The flak from Wakde ack-ack was so thick that I felt like going for a walk." Lt. DAY was unable to land at Wakde because of explosions from the ammunition in the

burning planes and the debris scattered about the runway, so he proceeded to Hollandia where he landed shortly after daybreak.

We now come to the more exciting part of the Wakde raid, beginning with foxholes which suddenly became more popular than the Stork Club in New York. The red alert had been called, and after waiting thirty minutes, although the all-clear had not sounded, we retired to our bunks to be unceremoniously



B-25s of the 418th NFS on the ground between missions. (Pape)

awakened by the sing-song sound of the Jap plane, but before we could get in our foxholes, the ack-ack opened up and scared the living daylights out of everybody. The Observers, Lt. PORTER, O-888876; Lt. BUNYAN ALLEN CRAIN, O-888869; and Lt. PROSPER F. RUFER, O-888930, all take an oath that they passed each other three times within the fifty feet to the foxhole. The next day, having no airplanes, we were forced to hitch rides with anybody we could find back to our camp at Hollandia.

On 19 June, for the first time, the 418th had its entire Squadron airborne on a daylight mission to Wide Bay, thirty miles south of Rabaul, New Britain. We took off from Nadzab with the weather 00 and as a consequence our fighter escort could not accompany us. The mission was to blast Japanese field guns, bivouac areas and radio towers, and was quite successful, however, not spectacular. The mission did prove humorous because it turned out to be quite a rat race that will long be remembered. A gunnery pattern was set up, and everybody conformed to this pattern with the exception of two ships which flew exactly opposite to the pattern, resulting in ships meeting head on and waving to each other from a safe distance. These two culprits have never identified themselves and for good reason, too. If at any time in the future their identities are discovered, they will be given a G.I. shower bath and a manual to read on aerial gunnery. The mission was completed in spite of this without mishap, and all ships returned.

Our activity against the enemy for the rest of the month beginning on 15 June consisted of night harassing raids, very unspectacular, against Wewak, Dagua, and But Dromes and the enemy ground installations in the surrounding area. A number of these missions were in cooperation with Navy PT boats. By using us as bait for the ack-ack, the PTs would cruise along shore and upon spotting the gun emplacements firing at us would proceed to knock them out. This was carried off with a great deal of success and due to the fact that we do not have Naval Intelligence Reports, we can only say that many gun positions were destroyed.

T/Sgt. JOHN C. MALONE, 16033961, Acting First Sergeant, was made First Sergeant of our organization (per Para. 5, Special Orders # 67, Headquarters, Fifth Fighter Command, dated 15 June

WARREN EASTWICK recalls the Rabaul raid in which he was navigator for Capt. GUNN. As lead plane of twelve, they bombed and strafed their primary target at Rabaul, the Jap transmission station that was relaying our Navy movements. On the way home, their radio operator picked up a station in Australia. Swing music was interrupted by a news flash: "American B-25s this morning knocked out the Japanese radio station at Rabaul."

1944), and on this same order Cpl. HUGH J. MILLER, 34506585, Personnel Clerk, was promoted to the rank of sergeant and made Squadron Sergeant Major, replacing S/Sgt. RAYMOND T. FRENCH, 8914612, who had been placed on flying status as an aerial gunner.

In our move to Hollandia from Finschhafen, we were unable to get all of our equipment aboard LST 463 and were forced to leave approximately thirty tons of equipment plus one 2.5- ton truck and one jeep along with 1st Lt. CHARLES E. LALANNE, JR., O-575276, Assistant Intelligence Officer, and eleven enlisted men. On 29 June, they graced us with their appearance with all of the equipment except the jeep which had been appropriated by our fellow servicemen somewhere in Finschhafen. This really proved a blow to our morale; to have something stolen from us, however, was quite a novelty because our reputation is just the opposite.



B-25H of the 418th NFS with nose guns and side guns for increased firepower. This is Ray Duethman (RO). (Pape)

*B-25* with the 418th NFS tail insignia with a blue stripe with white borders. Shown are Lt. William Ross (P-left) and Ray Duethman (RO-right). (Pape)



#### 7. B-25 Missions Continue July 1944



A B-25 with the 418th NFS. (Pape)

he month of July began with the loss of one of our noted Squadron characters, Private JOSEPH O. FULLER, 18157326. FULLER was a Texas hillbilly singer who often wrote his own music which he sang to the haunting refrain of a guitar. Although the butt of many jokes, he was definitely good for the Squadron morale, even though he often had to duck a barrage of G.I. shoes. FULLER was transferred to the 9th Portable Hospital (per Para. 8, Special Orders #116, Headquarters, 3rd Field Hospital, dated 1 July 1944), and we later received word that he was transferred to the United States.

On 3 July, two new combat crews joined us: 1st Lt. MALCOLM L. RITCHIE O-725795, and 1st Lt. GORDON J. SCHMEISSER, O-728029, both pilots, and 2nd Lt. THEODORE E. KARA, O-869592, and F/O HAROLD D. McBRIDE, T-180216, as Radar Observers (per Para. 5, Special Orders #179, Headquarters, Fifth Fighter Command, dated 27 June 1944).

Lt. RITCHIE, a Texan by birth, was a dry goods salesman who gave it up to attend Texas Tech College for one year where he studied Engineering. He spent some time in the United States as a B-25 instructor and has already shown a number of our pilots the many peculiarities of the B-25.

F/O McBRIDE from Mansfield, Ohio, attended Ohio State and Otterbein College. Before entering the Service, he worked for Westinghouse Electric Co., thereupon entering the Army where he served in the Medical Corps for about one year previous to his transfer to the Air Corps.

Lt. KARA hails from Cleveland, Ohio. The major portion of his education was acquired at the University of Idaho, then was rounded off at Southwestern Louisiana Institute. Lt. KARA was quite well-known in the national amateur boxing circles and was a candidate for the 1940 Olympics in Berlin, which were never held.

On 6 July, 1st Lt. LINN W. LEDFORD, O-677789, Pilot; 2nd Lt. FRANK M. DUBASIK, O-888872, Radar Observer-Navigator; Sgt. MIGUEL APODACA, 39277487, Aerial Gunner; and Cpl.

ROBERT NELSON, 15324947, Radio Operator, ventured into the black on a strike against Moemi, Babo and Sagan Dromes. While over the target, the aircraft was holed by a 20mm and Cpl. NELSON was hit in the right foot by the breaking flak. He was awarded Purple Heart (per General Orders #9, Headquarters, 233rd Station Hospital, Office of the Commanding Officer, APO 713, Unit 1, dated 11 July 1944), and we have heard from medical authorities that his condition is not serious, and that he will be with us very soon.

One realizes in flying there are many freak accidents; however, Cp1. ROBERT F. MacINTYRE, 12181896, Radio Operator, has topped them all. On 13 July, while with 2nd Lt. ROBERT A. Mc MASTER, O-749570, Pilot; F/0 HOMER F. MOSELEY, JR., T-192888; and Sgt. VERNON A. PATTERSON, 38447259, Aerial Gunner, on a raid on Sagan, where the flak is thick enough to walk on, Cpl. MacINTYRE broke his ankle when the ship lurched to evade flak. Stranger things have happened, but you would have a hell of a time convincing Mac.

July 15 found 1st Lt. RICHARD F. DAY, O-885216, Pilot; 2nd Lt. ELWOOD H. GARDNER, O-888979, Navigator-Observer; S/Sgt. LOWELL E. EICH, 37449549; and Sgt. WELMAR Z. SMITH, 34409788, Aerial Gunner and Radio Operator, respectively, on a strike against enemy shipping around Soembroko Island. To their utmost satisfaction, they spotted a lugger and made two bombing and strafing runs on same. The lugger was left afire and badly listing and was later confirmed as destroyed. Upon returning to base, Lt. DAY found his hydraulic system had been shot away by enemy flak and was losing hydraulic fluid rapidly; however, with the aid of Sgt. EICH, Lt. GARDNER, and Sgt. SMITH, they were able to acquire enough hydraulic fluid from urine and coffee to pump the wheels down and lower the flaps in order to land safely. They particularly recommend coffee with lots of sugar and cream in it to increase the viscosity of the hydraulic fluid.

First Lt. ELDON D. AYRES, O-743302, Pilot, on 16 July with his crew, 2nd Lt. FRANK M. DUBASIK, O-888872; S/Sgt. WILLIAM D. MAYO, 34407099; and Cpl. ERNEST N. FERRARI, 33205734, Navigator-Observer, Aerial Gunner and Radio Operator, respectively, left Wakde for a raid on the Kokas jetty. The raid was highly successful in that their bombs were dropped on the target; however, misfortune dealt us a foul blow again when Cpl. FERRARI had one arm almost completely shot off by flak. Lt. AYRES, realizing that FERRARI was in a very bad way, landed at Biak where FERRARI was taken to the hospital immediately to have his arm amputated. On 20 July, at 0700, Cpl. FERRARI died of shock and loss of blood. Cpl. FERRARI was a tall, lanky cuss with a very ready sense of humor which proved an unending source of amusement to his fellow soldiers.

Well, the kids were barge-hunting again, and on 20 July, Lt. DAY and his crew spotted a 40-foot schooner just off Cape Jamtoep and with alacrity proceeded to blast it from the water. This was accomplished with nil damage to the aircraft and nil damage to the personnel in the fine old style of the 418th. On 21 July, Capt. LEON O. GUNN, O-885480 (Operations Officer), and his crew, 2nd Lt. PROSPER F. RUFER, O-888930, Navigator-Observer; T/Sgt. HORACE H. LANE, 14022386, Aerial Gunner; and Pvt. ALBERT M. McCULLOCH, 18034647, Radio Operator, spotted an oil barge and a 150-foot lugger in Metamani Bay, which they proceeded to destroy with bombing and strafing. The lugger was filled with personnel and great sport was had by the crew who strafed them as they struggled in the water.

On 27 July, four B-25s took off from Wakde to hunt shipping around the Vogelkop, two ships going up around Manokwari and two ships going down around Bentoni Bay and MacCluer Gulf. At Beraoer

River they met each other and at the same time spotted a Sugar Charlie loaded with personnel. In the rat race that followed, Lt. BARNETT, who had first spotted the ship and told the others, was outmaneuvered and was the last plane to make a run over the Sugar Charlie. The Nip gunners, having had three ships to practice on, found their aim much improved as Lt. BARNETT made his run, and his plane had one engine shot out. He immediately feathered the prop and started for home, but upon finding himself unable to maintain altitude, radioed the other members of the flight that he was going to crash land and gave them the approximate position. The other members of the flight proceeded back to base with the exception of 1st Lt. ALBERT R. SORBO, O-740296, who continued to search for Lt. BARNETT's plane. Lt. BARNETT had crashed at 1130 and at 1300 Lt. SORBO with the aid of flares from the grounded ship found its exact position and plotted it on the map. He then returned to base and notified the Second Air Sea Rescue, who formed a rescue party consisting of the following men: Capt. HAROLD M. MANSER, O-914830, Intelligence Officer for the Second Air Rescue; Lt. LESLIE E. LANGE, O-889755, Catalina pilot; Lt. LOUIS B. J. RAPMUND, New Guinea Forces, NICA, who established contact with the natives; and M/Sgt. DONALD C. BRICKNER, 32002215, of Fifth Air Force Headquarters, who acted as leader of the rescue expedition with a detachment of fourteen men from the Sixth Army.

According to our last reports, all members of the crew of the crashed ship: 1st Lt. IRA M. BARNETT, O-746022, Pilot; F/O THOMAS R. WRIGHT, T-180062, Navigator-Observer; Sgt. PETER P. WHIPLAND, 12203192, Radio Operator; and Pfc. HAROLD A. QUIDGEON, 31193866, Aerial Gunner, were in good health, and we felt much better about the whole situation, knowing that Chief TANTAQUIDGEON (Pfc. QUIDGEON'S real name), who is a full-blooded Mohican and a master at woodcraft and outdoor living, was with them. Supplies are continually being dropped to these men, and the rescue party is working its way into them.

S/Sgt. WILLIAM CHALIF, 36323337, chief clerk in operations, and Sgt. THOMAS D. MILLER, 38366029, painter, on 16 and 21 July, respectively, were transferred to the hospital with some strange and incurable jungle malady with rotation to the United States in view. Ah!, those lovely FEXO papers. Speaking of FEX0 papers, 2nd Lt. ALEXANDER J. BOBROWSKI, O-888991, and 2nd Lt. FREDDIE S. LARKINS, JR., O-888981, two navigator-observers, were relieved from this organization and ordered to proceed to the Point of Departure for the United States (per Ltr. FEXO, Fifth Air Force, dated 31 July). These boys were sent home because there was an overage of observers, as their pilots had been killed flying P-38s. FREDDIE LARKINS, a native of Brewton, Alabama, and a definite asset to the Squadron, as he was the butt of many jokes and stood up under it very well, making good use of his versatile sense of humor. Lt. BOBROWSKI will be missed, particularly in that he was a valuable member of our poker players. He was a native of Dearborn, Michigan, and one of the luckiest chaps in gambling out of the United States. He left many poorer and wiser men here after his return.

On 26 July, 2nd Lt. BERTRAM C. TOMPKINS, O-754563, Pilot, and F/O VINCENT WERTIN, T-180224, Observer, joined us (per Para. 11, Special Orders #208, Headquarters, Fifth Fighter Command, dated 26 July 1944). Lt. TOMPKINS, born in Ashland, New York, is by occupation a man of the soil, having spent many years of his life on a farm. He spent a half year at Albany Business College at Albany, New York. F/O WERTIN from Arvada, Colorado, finished high school at Arvada high and then spent time at various and sundry jobs prior to entering the Army. He has been nicknamed "Junior."

In the days of the early American frontier, there were many great scouts, Indian killers, and buffalo hunters. To that list of famous names, we would like to add that of Oakie Hopper (T/Sgt. OAKIE HOPPER, 37332111). This story began in the early days of our camp at Hollandia, at which time we had many sniper scares; however, this subsided, and as a substitute for entertainment, many fiendish and diabolical schemes were drawn up by Mac and Lousy Weeks (Pvt. ALBERT M. McCULLOCK, 18034647, and Sgt. LEWIS F. WEEKS, JR., 34408841, of the Communications Section). With the aid of a radio and a loud speaker, they set up a dummy which could be pulled into an upright position by a string. In the meantime, our victim (Hopper) was being prepared with stories of Jap fanaticism and the Nips likelihood of penetrating our camp. At last the scheme was ready to materialize and with the exception of Sgt. HOPPER and Pvt. ALFRED J. MUISE, 31301511, the whole camp was enlightened. At exactly midnight, Sgt. HOPPER, who was visiting with Sgt. EDWARD C. MacINTOSH, 33331008, was having a cup of coffee. Suddenly in the light of the moon about thirty feet from MacINTOSH's tent, a figure sprang up and began to jabber Japanese. MacINTOSH, who was in on the plan, fumbled around for his gun, never quite getting it. In the meantime, Sgt. HOPPER, much quicker on the trigger, grabbed up a Tommy gun and was laying down a barrage, when he was joined by Pvt. MUISE, who demonstrated his courage by attempting to sneak up on the dummy with all the flashlights of the Squadron on his back. Therefore, we hereby submit the name of OAKIE HOPPER to be added to the annals of the great and desire that GRUBBY MUISE also be given due consideration.

## 8. B-25 Missions Cease, Prepare for P-61s August 1944

e began the month of August with four combat replacements: Sgt. JOHN H. DUNLAP, 6958285; Sgt. NORMAN E. GOLDEN, 11094224; Sgt. ISAAC D. LESLIE, 35260111; and Cpl. VASILIOS N. KARTSOTIS, 33367811, all Radio Operators (assigned per Para.1, Special Orders #214, Headquarters, Fifth Fighter Command, dated 1 August). These boys were a welcome addition to our Squadron as our few remaining Radio Operators were beginning to get a little bit high-strung and nervous from overwork. These boys, amiable by nature, were readily accepted by the Squadron and slipped into place very readily.

On 3 August, F/O WALTER FRADIN, T-180019, Radar Observer-Navigator, was blessed by the Almighty, smiled upon by Dome Fortune, touched by the rod of Midas and sent back to the USA by the Fifth Air Force (per Ltr. FEXO 210-31, Subj: Orders, Headquarters, USAFFE, dated 22 July 1944). F/O FRADIN was a native of Brooklyn and White Plains. He spent most of his life there and swore upon completion of his tour of duty with the U.S. Air Forces he was going to spend the rest of his life there.

August 3 began a week of bad luck for us with the loss of two darned fine lads on a mission to Utarom: S/Sgt. D.S. THOMPSON JR., 6394019, Radio Operator, and Sgt. MIGUEL J. APODACA, 39277487, Aerial Gunner. Sgt. THOMPSON was from Pearson, Georgia, and spent the major portion of his life working in a turpentine forest. He was a squat, broad, impressive figure of a man and was well-known in the Squadron for his ability to get work done. His good-natured way of accepting things made him one of the most popular men of the Squadron. When the ship returned from the mission, although Sgt. THOMPSON was badly mutilated, he was not the least bit excited and was continually inquiring as to the health of Sgt. APODACA, who had died before the plane landed. Even though he knew he was dying, he continued to act in a very calm and collected way, and his courage should be an example to any good red-blooded American. Sgt. APODACA had become unconscious during the flight back and died without regaining consciousness before the plane landed. APODACA was the father of two children and a native of California. The loss of both these boys will be felt by our Squadron.

August 5 was another black day for us with the loss of 1st Lt. GORDON J. SCHMEISSER, O-728029, Pilot, 2nd Lt. THEODORE E. KARA, O-869592, Radar Observer-Navigator; Sgt. ISAAC D. LESLIE, 35260111, Radio Operator; and Sgt. VERNON A. PATTERSON, 38447259, Aerial Gunner. Lt. SCHMEISSER and Lt. KARA had only recently joined our organization. This was their third mission, Sgt. LESLIE's first, but Sgt. PATTERSON was, of course, by this time a veteran and had flown numerous sorties. These boys are listed as missing in action, and it is our hope that they will return safely.

On 18 August, we ceased operating as a night intruder outfit and our B-25s were taken away from us to be used as Fat Cats for the various commands. We were informed at this time that we would be equipped with P-61s, the new twin-engine night fighter, and would resume our role as night fighters. This proved quite a blow to us in some respects as we had begun to like our work in the B-25s very much; however, our combat personnel, versatile as they are, resigned themselves to the transition to the fourth airplane they were to fly in combat. In the meantime, the various crews were busy hauling grub up from

the mainland of Australia to the numerous outfits on the island of New Guinea and, for a short time, we enjoyed the distinction of being the only Fat Cat Squadron in the Southwest Pacific.

Everybody was at attention. What is this? A visiting dignitary? Not at all. Only the return of our four conquering heroes in the jungle. Enter 1st Lt. IRA M. BARNETT, O-746022, Pilot, F/O THOMAS R. WRIGHT, T-180062, Observer; Sgt. PETER P. WHIPLAND, 12203192, Radio Operator; and Pfc. HAROLD A. QUIDGEON, 31193866, Aerial Gunner. The boys were in darned-good health, considering the ordeal they had gone through, and we give you this story as to what happened.

#### Narrative Account of Crew of B-25 Down in the Vogelkop from 27 July 1944 Until Their Return to Base 19 August 1944

t 1120/K Lt. BARNETT crash-landed his B-25 in swamp and water lily grasses some twenty miles north of Bira. Crew members were prepared for the crash and followed the careful routine procedure in which they had been instructed by the pilot. The plane broke near the trailing edge of the wing and the Radio Operator, WHIPLAND, and Tail Gunner, QUIDGEON, were thrown about six feet from the plane, landing in three feet of water. The Pilot,

BARNETT, and Navigator, WRIGHT, were slightly bruised, the former in his seat and the latter in a prone position. The entire crew assembled on the wing of the plane where first aid was administered to a deep gash in Sgt. WHIPLAND's leg and sulfanilamide applied liberally and iodine applied to sundry bruises and scratches. Emergency equipment was assembled and attempts made to send out a signal by the "Gibson Girl" which had been damaged. The nature of the terrain made any movement difficult, and it was decided to camp on the wing of the plane and wait for sighting and rescue. At about 1300/K a

Chief TANTAQUIDGEON is reported to have served in three wars. He joined the "Home Guard" as a boy during World War I, and later served in the Army during the Korean War.

B-25 piloted by Lt. SORBO appeared overhead and the party fired three flares from pyrotechnic pistols, attracting the attention of the B-25 crew who orbited the position before leaving the area. Later that afternoon a Catalina appeared and more flares were fired. The Catalina flew low over the area and the party attempted a semaphore message. The Catalina or Mitchell, or sometimes both, visited the area almost every day. Panels were employed for requests of food and radio batteries, which were the principal requirements. Supplies were parachuted from the Catalina, but landed in the high water lily grass about 200 yards from the plane. A graphic picture of the difficulty of movement is obtained from the statement that it required about three hours for the party to reach the supplies while the Catalina hovered, directing the party to the point of drop. With these supplies an adequate emergency commissary was available and jungle hammocks were slung by two of the party and mosquito netting was stretched along the wing. Cooking was done on an improvised stove made out of a gallon tin which was perforated and packed with kapok from the life preserver, using 100 octane gas as fuel. Gas lamps with the wicks were also improvised to supplement the flashlights, and a frying pan was made of sheet metal from the container of the emergency raft. Mess kits were made from water cans, and table implements from first aid splints. The relief tubes served as a grateful and convenient latrine which obviated the necessity of leaving the mosquito netting during the night with resultant exposure to these pests, which were numerous, but non-malarious. The parachutes served as blankets and the early diet was varied by a mess of frog legs caught fresh on the wing of the plane to which they were jack-lighted. Adequate supplies of drinking water were obtained from rainwater trapped in the tarpaulin of the life raft, and principal discomforts were the insomnia which affected all members of the party and the monotony of the routine. The visits from friendly planes and the sporadic drops which contained some reading matter were the chief diversions until the Walkie Talkie was dropped, with which the crew was informed of the progress of the rescue party and received informal broadcasts, including news summaries.

On 16 August at about 1530/K, the rescue party reached the plane and started back within an hour. Before leaving the spot, the crew made another inspection of the plane, destroying radio equipment and all classified materials that could be of advantage to the enemy. The one flexible .50 caliber gun that had been readied for emergency defense was rendered unserviceable before leaving the scene, and at about 1630/K the difficult trip out was started, with the natives assisting individual crew members in the treacherous footing of the lily grass. Camp was pitched for the night in a sago hut and progress resumed the next day on foot, stopping that night at another group of huts, and walking on the following day to Camp Kawaffe where the dugouts and rubber boats had been left. (Ed. note: The Camp Kawaffe location is identified on the New Guinea area of operations map). The party was greeted at this camp by the birth of a native baby and good-luck gifts of cigarettes were extended to the happy parents. The homeward journey was resumed by boat that afternoon and far into the night which was spent as comfortably as possible in the outriggers. The journey downstream by boat, each boat having a native Capt., was continued at dawn. The natives paddled noticeably faster as they neared their village with a five-man crew, beating the rhythm to a chanty. The prosody of the beat, which was dactylic, swelled as the home village was approached. The entire party composed of natives, Dutch, Indonesians, Australians, and Americans sang together the Dutch National Anthem while the Dutch flag was hoisted from the stern of each canoe and dugout. Word of the imminent arrival had obviously preceded the party as the whole village as well as the American Infantrymen had assembled on the river bank and a royal welcome indeed, an improvised twenty-one gun salute, was fired with flares from a mortar.

The Catalina, which was the appointed vehicle for the last stage of the journey, was riding anchor in the river, but its crew was ashore in the welcoming party which included Major SMITH, Commanding Officer of the 418th. After a meal prepared by the natives under the supervision of the priest-schoolteacher, the crew members were crowded into the Catalina and flown back to Owi, and after reporting to Air Sea Rescue, they flew in a Squadron B-25 to the base camp at Hollandia where an even warmer welcome and a hot supper were waiting. All crew members were enthusiastic in their tributes to the zeal, efficiency, and devotion of natives and members of the rescue party.

The boys could have used a carbine and a Tommy gun as additions to the equipment of the plane, and extra batteries for the radio would have provided a vital means of communication and insured and facilitated rescue. It would also have been useful to have had the Army Handbook of Malay and Pidgin, which has never been available to the crews of the Squadron in their ten months overseas in this theater.

We lost three more members of our Squadron: Capt. JACK L. POWELL, O-915655, Executive Officer; Cpl. SEYMOUR SCHAFSTEIN, 12155964, Armorer; and Pfc. MARCUS E. BREWER, 14153424, gas truck driver, to the surrounding hospitals, suffering from incurable jungle maladies. We have it on good authority (Latrine Rumor) that these boys were sent back to the States. On 28 and 30

August, Capt. WILLIAM M. BALL, O-901929, and 1st Lt. WILLIAM W. BARR, O-576284, were attached to this outfit as GCI Controllers and were to go along with us to our new base wherever that may be. Both boys were very readily accepted and joyfully received in the Squadron.

On 31 August, we were to lose one of our most famous Squadron characters, Capt. EDWARD L. HOLSTEN, O-917344, Intelligence Officer, who was being sent home to study for American Civil Government. Capt. HOLSTEN acquired many nicknames while with our Squadron, among which were "Mother," "Father Time," and "Betty." The name "Betty" was his last and most prominent nickname, which was attributed to him as a result of his recognition classes in which the Jap aircraft Betty played a predominant role. Capt. HOLSTEN was quite cosmopolitan, a former archaeologist of Columbia University. He had many wide and worldly travels, spoke innumerable languages, and was a Wall Street banker. "Betty" was dear to the hearts of many of us, and although we wish him much success on his latest venture, his personality and Marlborough cigarettes will be notably missed.

Tragedy again takes the limelight, this time in a much milder form but quite a blow to all of us. "Flaps Miller" owned by 1st Lt. THOMAS R. MILLER, O-743476, a rat terrier and a No. 1 Squadron dog, suffered a broken leg when he was unceremoniously thrown from a speeding jeep. "Flaps" was immediately taken to the hospital and his leg set. We are now happy to report that his condition is much improved and he is well on the road to recovery. With darkness there must also be light, and on the lighter side of our dog life we are happy to announce that "Pudge," the Motor Pool dog is the proud mother of four sons and a daughter. Mother and babies are doing well. The ancestry of these puppies is somewhat cloudy; however, we have evidence to the effect that "Flaps" was very instrumental.

## 9. Conversion to P-61s and Move to Morotai, Netherland East Indies September 1944



A classic photo of a P-61B Black Widow, with three crew members in place: pilot, gunner, and radar operator. The top turret with four .50 caliber guns is shown. This photo was probably taken in the U.S. and is the same view as used in a large poster distributed by the World War II Night Fighter Association, but with a different background having clouds . (Pape)

In the beginning of September, we were in the midst of a reconversion from B-25s to P-61s with all crews participating in training flights to familiarize themselves with their new equipment. On 16 September, the air echelon under the command of Major CARROLL C. SMITH, O-418144, our Commanding Officer, moved to Owi Island to assist the 421st Night Fighter Squadron in night fighter patrols and to gain experience for future reference, 1eaving 1st Lt. NORBERT J. DeBOER, O-574380, our Executive Officer, in command of the ground echelon at Hollandia, which was to move to a new base and set up camp for future operations. Meantime, the air echelon continued its training patrols, alternating every other night with the 421st for the defense of Owi. It might be significant to mention that we eventually took over the defense of Owi from the 421st because they maintained they were unable to continue operations in view of the fact that their ground echelon was loaded aboard boats for movement. For the record, the 421st had exactly the same number of personnel at Owi that we had, and we found no particular difficulty in maintaining a constant air patrol for the duration of our stay there. On 15-16 September, we received the following replacement crews: 2nd Lt. JAMES R. Mc QUEEN, O-755987, Pilot, and 2nd Lt. HUGH L. GORDON, JR, O-551348, his Radar Observer; 2nd Lt. CARL R. TIDRICK, O-762555, Pilot, and his Radar Observer, 2nd Lt. MORTIMER I. GOLDSTEIN,



Owi Island, immediately southeast of Biak Island. (Fisher)

O-870610; and 2nd Lt. GEORGE H. WILLIAMS, JR., O-63803, pilot, and his Radar Observer, 2nd Lt. HOWARD C. DALBEY, O-870607, all crews assigned per Para. 6, Special Orders #259, Hqs., Fifth Fighter Command, dated 15 September. These boys were most welcome, as our year overseas was drawing rapidly to a close, and a number of us were incensed with the idea of returning-- not to the Philippines--but to the U.S.A. On the whole, I think it is a helluva good idea, myself, as there is something that proves increasingly fascinating about the terrain of North America.

Speaking of the Western Hemisphere, our rotation quota for the month of September came through, and those smiled upon were the following: T/Sgt. O. M. SOLOMON, 6956215; T/Sgt. MICKEY TEMONOFF, 7028715, both crew chiefs; and S/Sgt. PAUL S. STRAUSBAUGH, 7026840, engineering clerk, who were all transferred to the 268th Replacement Company, 91st Replacement Battalion, per Para. 14, Special Orders #92, dated 14 September 1944, to await transportation to the States. Sgt. ELVIN G. EHLERS, 39251111, radar mechanic, was evacuated to the 5th Field Hospital, prior to returning Stateside with a severe case of fungus infection. We are sorry to lose him, but glad to see him home for cure.

21 September saw the transfer to us of S/Sgt. T. W. BURCHETTE, 36157073, painter, per Para. 2, Special Orders #264, Hqs., Fifth Fighter Command, dated 20 September 1944, who decided that he had fat-catted enough in the States and was ready to see a little of this here war.



The airstrip on Morotai Island. (H. Gordon)



Camp in banana grove on Morotai. Persons shown appear to be Lt. Robert McMaster (P-right) and F/O Homer Moseley (RO-left). (H. Gordon)

On 21 September, our ground echelon at Hollandia struck camp and boarded LST 24 and LST 171 with all equipment, preparatory for the move to our next base. They sat in the bay for two days to await the formation of the convoy, and on 23 September, departed for our new base. After an uneventful trip of four days, covering a distance of 900 miles, they landed at Morotai Island, thirtyfive miles north of Halmahera. Since this landing occurred on D+12, the new base was in its usual state of muddy confusion and lack of roads. On this same evening, a number of our men en route to our camp area from the beach were suddenly set upon by Nip aircraft and many narrow escapes, fortunately, were enjoyed; however, Pvt. Ζ. FREEMAN KRUM, 33352841, airplane mechanic, was not so fortunate and suffered a severe wound from flak. A spent .50 calibre slug embedded itself downward into his left shoulder. Capt.

ROWLAND H. ROBERTSON, O-482794, our Flight Surgeon, midst the falling flak, proceeded to operate and removed the slug from KRUM's shoulder by flashlight. The operation was quite successful and KRUM was evacuated to Hollandia for further medical aid.

On the morning of 28 September, after laboriously covering a distance of eight miles in twenty-four hours, we arrived at what was to be our camp site and immediately set to work to build a home. Our area was by far one of the nicest we have ever had, situated in the midst of a banana grove which was laden with luscious fruit. Everybody pitched in and things were soon operating full blast, which is typical of the 418th.



Welcoming party at the 418th campsite on Morotai. From Fifth Air Force "Pacific Sweep." (Liberatore)



Dispensery tent on Morotai, with medics S/Sgt. Mike Liberatore (right), and Pfc. John Palcic (left). (Liberatore)

For those of you who do not believe in predestination, we offer food for thought. Around the middle of September, 2nd Lt. DALE B. MERRILL O-750657; F/O CLEWLEY W. STEVENS, T-192939; S/Sgt. LAMAR W. PEEL, 18053576; S/Sgt. SAMUEL SUSSMAN, 32727082; and Sgt. GEORGE B. KOPPELMAN, 3374139, left Hollandia on an extended tour of Australia for the purpose of getting fresh foods and potations, or in the vernacular of flying men "went a-fat-cattin." Lt. MILLER, being a trusting soul as far as navigation is concerned, took the direction of "CLEWLEY THE CLAW" (F/O STEVENS) and attempted a non-stop, Lindbergh-



Lt. Carl Tidrick (center), Pilot, with RO, Lt. Mort Goldstein (right), and Crew Chief Baker (left). Lt. Tidrick later became CO in November 1945. After the war, Lt. Goldstein changed his last name to Gordon and advanced to the rank of Brigadier General, USAF, the only Radar Observer who became a General. (Tidrick)

style trip from Hollandia to Townsville. We have heard many stories as to the causes of what follows, and we are in a quandary as to which to take. F/O STEVENS says that due to the inaccuracies of the maps and to the fact that two hundred gallons of gas disappeared in fifteen minutes, they became lost and bewildered just offshore of Townsville and were forced to ditch the aircraft. Again, The Claw enters the picture, for it is stated that he yelled as the plane touched the water, "Put on the brakes; put on the brakes!" It is fortunate that the crew was speedily rescued or The Claw's call for "water brakes" might



have become one of the famous last lines in history.

Now we come to the point where predestination enters the picture, for Lt. MILLER, who had made a superb job of ditching the aircraft, rejoined the outfit and had been in camp hardly an hour when he was struck down by a speeding jeep, suffering a compound skull fracture and a leg fracture. The point I make is, after escaping death in its most virile form, he returned practically from the grave to be almost killed in one

of the most common accidents known. Brother, !if your number's up, it's up! To those of you who don't believe in predestination, I advise a careful study of the above story.

### 10. Operations from Morotai October 1944



P-61B Number 593 (full serial number 42-39593), near Morotai, flown by Jim McQueen, pilot, and Hugh Gordon, RO. (H.Gordon)

he month of October was to see us operating as successful night fighters for the first time in our career. On 5 October, Major CARROLL C. SMITH, O-418144, our Commanding Officer, and his Observer, 2nd Lt. PHILIP B. PORTER, O-888876, along with five other combat crews and three controllers, 1st Lt. CHARLES W. BARR, O-576824; 1st Lt. ROBERT L. BOTTOMS, O-576926; and 1st Lt. ROGER S. LITTLEFORD, JR., O-572428, moved into Morotai to establish a night aerial defense. For our first two nights of operation, it was very uneventful due to

inclement weather. On the night of 7 October, we experienced our first red alert since the flight echelon had been here. At that time, Major SMITH and Lt. PORTER, and 1st Lt. HAROLD B. WHITTERN O-740320, and his Radar Observer, 2nd Lt. BUNYAN A. CRAIN, JR., O-888869, were airborne on patrols. The Nip being much closer to SMITH and PORTER,

The arrival of 418th combat crews at Morotai on 5 October was only twenty days after the 15 September landing of U.S. forces.



Maj. Smith at the 418th NFS camp on Morotai. (Sullivan)





Maj. Smith's P-61B, No. 595 (full serial number 42-39595), "TIME'S A WASTIN'", on Morotai. (Smith)

"Snuffy Smith" nose art on Maj. Smith's plane.

they were vectored by GCI to an intercepting course where a quick radar interception was completed and the Nip was shot down, thus making our batting average 1,000, one contact, one Nip aircraft, and one dead Nip. For the rest of the month, our operations were exciting, however, not quite so successful, with numerous chases but no kills, the latter being the result of having to break away on account of the ackack. Our situation was made increasingly difficult by the fact that the Air Defense Officer of the Thirteenth Air Force was a hide-bound anti-aircraft officer, who thought that the airplane would never replace the horse; thus, he gave every break to the anti-aircraft rather than to the night fighters, and no fifty-fifty proposition could be worked out; however, this was to change around the end of the month, and things began to take a new light.

We closed our month of operations by an addition to our local patrols, doing night intruder work with B-25s over the Halmaheras and the Celebes in an attempt to knock out the night operations of the Nips. This continued until the operational control of Morotai was taken over by our esteemed and badly confused competitors, the Thirteenth Air Force, at which time the night intruder work was taken over by the 38th

The history doesn't explain how B-25s, which were "taken away from us" on 18 August, were used for further night intruder work at the end of October. Evidently, a few "stray" B-25s were left.

Bomb Group, who hadn't then and haven't yet the proper conception of night intruding. As a consequence, the missions proved very dull and drab because they were conducted at 10,000 feet instead of the grand old style of the 418th, "on the deck with guns blazing."

On 3 October, 2nd Lt. JOHN YACKMAN, O-16419437, joined our Squadron per Para. 1, Special



1st Lt. Harold Whittern (P-right), with 2nd Lt. Bunyan Crain (RO-left), who is holding Squadron dog named "Flaps." (Tidrick)

Orders 45, Headquarters 85th Fighter Wing, dated 1 October 1944, as Assistant S-2. Lt. YACKMAN is from Greensburg, Pennsylvania, and before joining us was a member of the staff of the 85th Fighter Wing.

On 29 October, 2nd Lt. DONALD R. LASH, O-758012; 2nd Lt. GEORGE M. ELLINGS, O-770213; and 2nd Lt. DAVID R. AMERMAN, O-767061; and F/Os CHARLES E. HENRY, T-180281; MILTON BURMAN, T-180153; and WARREN H. BAKEWELL, O-870844, joined as replacement crews fresh from the States (Special Orders lost due to enemy action).

Lt. LASH is from Council Bluffs, Iowa, studied two years at the University of Iowa, and was a member of the Delta Upsilon Fraternity. After completing his flying training, he served as a B-25 instructor for a short period of time, then completed night fighter training and joined us here. Lt. ELLINGS was born in Tuxedo, New York, moved to California at an early age, and completed his education at Santa Barbara High and University of California, for two years as a student of mechanical engineering. Lt.

Former pilot, Capt. Malcolm Ritchie, recalls at Morotai (then a 1st Lt.): "I remember flying at night on patrol and being able to look down in an active volcano crater on a nearby island. That was quite an impressive sight for a young man from west Texas."

AMERMAN, who just turned nineteen, consequently being the youngest known night fighter pilot, is from the State of New York and had hardly been in camp an hour before proving himself a worthy successor to Rube Goldberg, by rigging up several complex gadgets. F/O HENRY, from West Haven, Connecticut, finished West Haven High and prior to his entrance into the Army worked for Vought Sikorsky as an electrician. F/O BURMAN, born in Brooklyn, graduated from James Madison High School and goldbricked awhile before entering the Army, at which time he hung up the record for being



Maj. Smith (CO) leaving a P-61 during visit to Biak Island. (Smith)

in more training schools than any person yet found. F/O BAKEWELL is from North Dakota and spent some time at North Dakota Agricultural College.

In our Morotai camp site, indeed a lovely place, we were stymied by a lack of water. The area engineer made arrangements whereby we were to be supplied by a well which was being dug by an Australian well-digging unit who were having very little success, although they were thoroughly equipped for the job. Again our reputation for resourcefulness hits the limelight: S/Sgt. LOWELL E. EICH, 37449549, aerial gunner; S/Sgt. ANCEL RADER, 35112269, airplane mechanic; and S/Sgt. DONALD C. WESTFALL, 35378875, armorer, let their ingenuity and imagination run wild. Under the direction of Sgt. EICH, these men set up a rig and a make-shift drill five days after the Australian unit had started drilling a well. It will be significant to note that within a period of six days, Sgt. EICH and his boys had drilled one hundred and fifteen feet with their improvised tools and struck

water, while the Australian well-digging unit, trained in this field, were three days later in completing their well of eighty-eight feet in the same type of earth at a distance of about five hundred yards from us. Sgt. EICH's device was such that I feel sure Rube Goldberg would hang his head in shame, consisting of a weapons carrier with a winch and a two and one-half ton truck with a cable attached to a wheel, in turn attached to the left rear wheel for driving power, strung through a maze of pulleys attached to a tripod of heavy mahogany trees about thirty-feet high. We do hereby state and likewise defy any other unit to take up a challenge: the 418th Night Fighter Squadron can accomplish more in less time with less tools than any other unit in the Asiatic-Pacific Command.





Night firing demonstation on the ground of all eight guns with tracer ammunition. This photo was taken in the U.S. (Thompson)

(Pape)

Enemy aircraft view of the front of a P-61, showing the top turret with four .50 caliber machine guns. The bullet proof windscreens are for the pilot (front) and gunner (behind). The horizontal stabilizer in the tail shows behind the turret. (Thompson)





Pilot's compartment in a P-61. The optical gunsight is centered just behind the bullet proof windscreen. The square opening below the gunsight is the location of the pilot's radar scope (not installed here). (Pape)

The detail view (below) shows the small pilot's radar scope in place. (Pape)





Nose of a P-61 with the nose cover removed, revealing the SCR-720 radar antenna "spinner." This photo is with the 421st NFS. (Pape)



Radar Observer's compartment in the rear of the crew nacelle. The two radar scopes are in the center, one above the other. (Pape)

## NORTHROP BLACK WIDOW P-61



(Aviation Pub.)

## 11. Morotai Air Operations and Ground Echelon Moves to Leyte, Philippine Islands November 1944

Number one on the list was our GCI coverage. The longest range in which the night fighter had to operate was a distance of forty miles, with the other distances oftentimes as short as eight miles, thus contributing greatly to our lack of successful interceptions; however, we were not to be stopped at this and revised our strategy to suit the tactics employed by the Nips, utilizing our facilities at hand. These handicaps were not to deter us from our purpose, for on 6 November, 1st Lt. WILLIAM F. ROSS, O-745943, pilot, and 2nd Lt. RAYMOND L. DUETHMAN, O-530246, radar observer, sneaked up on a Betty bomber just off the Halmahera coast and blasted it to smithereens. It is noteworthy to mention at this time that in the process of shooting the Nip down, Lt. ROSS was forced to travel at such high speeds (420 mph) that the canopy blew away, making a severe cut of seven stitches in Lt. ROSS's left temple; however, with blood streaming down his face and in his eyes, he continued the interception to successfully demolish the Nip, vaguely remembering the entire incident. This was not enough, for Lt. ROSS, injured though he was, made light of his injury and continued his patrol for one hour, at which time he was relieved.

On November 13, we chalked up another victory with 1st Lt. HAROLD B. WHITTERN, O-740320, pilot, and his radar observer, 2nd Lt. BUNYAN A. CRAIN, JR., O-888869. Lt. CRAIN, after picking up the target at eight miles, completed a quick radar interception and vectored the pilot to within 200 feet where a visual was obtained. The visual was made increasingly difficult because there was no moon and, consequently, the enemy plane had to be silhouetted against the stars. This was one of the best interceptions made by this Squadron.

P-61s were not the only surprise that we had for the Nip. Through cooperation with the Thirteenth Air Force, we began a series of searchlight cooperation missions, using P-38Js, which were by no means in the pink of condition. The condition of these aircraft was only one of many obstacles which we were to overcome successfully. Numbering among those obstacles was our difficulty in controlling the ack-ack. One colonel in the anti-aircraft unit had the gall to say, "Under no circumstances will we hold the ack-ack. This is war, and the night fighter will just have to take



Capt. Leon O. Gunn (P-right) and 2nd Lt. William F. Sherman (RO-left) with P-61. (Pape)

his chances." The fact that this is war proved interesting information to us as we had spent only thirteen months in this theater, and our "dear friend," the colonel, had been here a trifle over four months. To prove that the colonel was not fooling, Major CARROLL C. SMITH, O-418144, while over the area in his searchlight orbit was fired upon five times on five different occasions. Major SMITH, prior to becoming a night fighter, had hauled tow targets for anti-aircraft practice, and consequently was not overly perturbed the first few times, even going so far as to tell the anti-aircraft unit by radio how far they were missing him to help to calibrate their fire. However, after the fifth time, due to his careful directions to them, he was almost shot down, thus drawing things to a head, and an immediate showdown was had with the anti-aircraft people with much hair pulling and the casting of doubt upon the ancestry of various and sundry individuals of the Coast Artillery (AA). After this meeting, a perfect understanding was had, and as a consequence, no further troubles developed along these lines.

First Lt. VERNON C. JENNER, O-746119, had been borrowed from the 80th Fighter Squadron, 8th Fighter Group, for searchlight cooperation because we had an insufficient number of pilots to fly P-38s. On the night of 24 November, Lt. JENNER successfully knocked down two Nips out of the searchlights, both taking place within a very few minutes of each other. This proved our long-fought struggle for searchlight cooperation and was very joyously received at Thirteenth Air Force Headquarters. Lt. JENNER was not the only one to enjoy this success, for on 26 November, Major SMITH caught a Nip in the searchlights, scoring a probable, and on 28 November, he caught two more in the searchlights, destroying both. This was indeed a good batting average for our searchlight coop, for out of five Nips illuminated, four were destroyed and one probably destroyed, which score far surpasses what is considered successful night fighting. Night fighting is considered successful if twelve percent of the enemy planes are shot down.

On November 6, our ground echelon loaded aboard boats for the move to a new base. They left the Morotai harbor on 10 November and arrived at Leyte, Philippine Islands on 14 November, where they were to stage for a further move. The trip from Morotai to Leyte was quite eventful, for on 13 November while undergoing an enemy air attack, the ship with our equipment on it was narrowly missed by a

torpedo dropped by a Nip plane. The entire air attack was very generously described by the public address system aboard the ship, calling off the ranges of the Nip and even so far as the Captain making the statement, "Prepare to receive torpedo in the starboard quarter." Fate, however, was looking after us, and the ship successfully evaded the torpedo and shot down the enemy plane, which exploded so close that parts were thrown on deck of the ship.

The arrival of the ground echelon at Leyte on 14 November was less than a month after the 20 October first landings at Leyte, the first point of return to the Philippines!!

Our new camp site at Leyte was situated along a very good beach in a coconut grove just outside San Roque. During this period of our stay at Leyte, the members of the ground echelon were given infantry training, such as how to set up perimeters of defense, how to employ a cross-fire, and how to lob hand grenades. They were also told at this time that it was highly possible that they would support the Infantry in the next landing. For the duration of their stay there, they continued this training and spent quite a lot of time toughening up with athletics and swimming each afternoon on a lovely beach. They were very fortunate to have a very excellent Thanksgiving dinner with succulent roast chicken as the main course.

These boys had to spend each night and part of the day in foxholes due to the heavy raids of the Nip.

Many of them saw for the first time, dog fights in the daylight, and stood out and cheered our fighters on. One night the entire camp was alerted, placed on a ground defense against an enemy paratroop attack; however, the Nips disappointed us and came the following night instead, at which time they were quickly and efficiently taken care of by the Infantry.

Pfc. CLARENCE N. ASP, 36240844, duty soldier, a slow-talking fellow from the farmlands of Minnesota, had the extreme misfortune while cleaning his gun of having the gun go off, shooting Sgt. ARTHELUS M. KELLY, 18054543, engineering clerk, through the buttocks. Fortunately the wound was not serious, but caused quite a furor in the Squadron.

On 30 November, the ground echelon loaded aboard boats for the impending move to Mindoro and sat in Leyte harbor for the duration of the month waiting further instructions.

Back with the air echelon at Morotai, the following men joined us as replacements from the States: Cp1. EDGAR M. MATTHIAS, 31277101, and Cpl. JESSE MacDOWELL, 35534394, two radar mechanics (per Para. 23, Special Orders #139, Headquarters, 266th Replacement Company, AAF, 91st Replacement Battalion, AAF, dated 16 October 1944) and Cpl. NATHAN H. FICHTELBERG, 32183734, medic, and Pfc. THOMAS J. STANLEY, 33329545, cook, (per Para. 25, Special Orders 127, Headquarters, 268th Replacement Company, AAF, dated 7 November 1944). These boys were joyously received because the more we get, the more we want, for it means some of us will get to return to the United States.

While we are on the subject of returning to the United States, it is fitting to mention at this time that our first rotation of combat personnel has come to pass beginning with 1st Lt. THOMAS "Shaky" R. MILLER, O-743476, who was sent home through the 11th Replacement Battalion, AAF, APO 920, per Para. 1, Special Orders #150, Headquarters, FEAF, dated 11 November 1944. Lt. MILLER is from Zanesville, Ohio. On 24 November, T/Sgt. FRANK VAZ, JR., 39836812, airplane mechanic, was rotated through the Rotation Detachment, Headquarters Base G, APO 565, per Para. 2, Special Orders #329, Headquarters, Fifth Fighter Command, dated 24 November 1944. Sgt. VAZ had served considerable time overseas with the Sixth Fighter Squadron, both in Hawaii and in New Guinea. He knew more about planes than the men who make them. His stability and efficiency are a definite loss to this Squadron. On 27 November, more combat personnel returned to the States: Capt. RICHARD F. DAY, O-885216, 1st Lt. ELDON D. AYRES, O-743302, pilots and 2nd Lt. ELWOOD H. GARDNER, O-888979, radar observer, through 11th Replacement Battalion, AAF, APO 920, per Para. 1, Special Orders #161, Headquarters, FEAF, dated 22 November 1944. Capt. DAY, a native of Indiana, served as a member of the RCAF in England as well as the RAF prior to United States entering the war and later a member of the American Wing there before coming to the United States to join us over here. Lt. AYRES is from Belle Fourche, South Dakota, "The largest town in northwestern South Dakota." Lt. GARDNER, a native of North Carolina, has been affectionately named "The Brow" due to his resemblance to the famous Dick Tracy character. We shall miss those boys, but we are glad they are fortunate enough to get back to their families in the States, however brief their stay may be.

We lost, by transfer, our latest replacement crew to the 419th Night Fighter Squadron. This crew, 2nd Lt. DAVID R. AMERMAN, O-767061, Pilot, and 2nd Lt. WARREN H. BAKEWELL, O-870844, Radar Observer, were transferred per Para. 2, Special Orders #179, Headquarters, FEAF, dated 10 December 1944, as of 20 November 1994. These boys, although having been with us only a short time, had become a very vital part of our organization and were extremely well liked by everyone. We hated to part with them, but we realize that we cannot hope to keep all of the best men in the 418th.



# 12. The Eventful Move to Mindoro, Philippine Islands December 1944

Beginning the month of December 1944, Sgt. EDWARD "LIL' ABNER" M. YOKUM, 39165363, operations clerk, was assigned to this organization (per para. 7, Special Orders #338, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 3 December). He has proved to be quite a character; although not from Dogpatch, Kentucky, we are sure he is the original.

Our operations for this particular month at Morotai, Netherlands East Indies, consisted of routine patrols, both searchlight cooperation and otherwise; however, on 9 December, 2nd Lt. BERTRAM C. TOMPKINS, O-754563, Pilot, and F/O VINCENT WERTIN, T-180224, Radar Observer, sneaked up on a Nip floatplane and blasted it from the sky. The kill was a flamer and could be seen by everyone. Naturally, after this exposition, the stock in the night fighters soared. Our operations continued with little or no excitement until 19 December at which time we ceased operations at Morotai, being relieved by the 419th Night Fighter Squadron on the local patrols and a RAAF Spitfire Wing on searchlight coop. After being relieved, we loafed around Morotai until 24 December at which time the fruits of the fat cat mission (Booze) were laid open to the public. We started early in the afternoon with our little party and continued until midnight. Every man in the organization was soused to the ears before the moon came up. Our party was interrupted during the night by Nips who came over to give us a display of fireworks which was very fitting for the occasion. As the bombs began to fall close by, there were many mad, drunken scrambles to the foxholes. Many of the boys, unable to make it farther, spent the remainder of the night in foxholes.

In the meantime, other things were happening to the often-forgotten ground echelon. After leaving Leyte, P.I., in early December aboard an LST, they proceeded to Mindoro, Philippine Islands, in the first wave of the attacking forces for a landing on 15 December. To overcome the difficulty of conducting air operations from Leyte during its rainy season, Gen. MacArthur sent the attacking convoy west through the Philippine Islands, and then north to Mindoro, where the climate was more favorable for air operations against Luzon, P.I., a short distance north. The convoy was under attack or surveillance by

the Japs all the way. On 13 December, two days before the scheduled assault on Mindoro, the light cruiser, Nashville, was hit by a kamikaze, killing over 130 men, and wounding another 190. On the morning of the landing, LST 738, carrying the 418th ground echelon, fell a victim to another member of one of the Japanese "Auger" Squadrons (Special Attack Corps). The LST caught fire



LST 738 burning at Mindoro, after being hit by kamikazi. (Sullivan)

and burned for about twenty minutes, giving the survivors long enough to get off on PT boats, destroyers, and life rafts etc., thus scattering them to the four winds, nobody being sure whether his buddies were dead or alive; however, when the final count was eventually made some days later, not a single-member of our organization had been killed.

A list of those wounded follows:		
2nd Lt. MORTIMER I. GOLDSTEIN		O-870610
T/Sgt. HORACE E. LANE		14022386
S/Sgt. EDMUND H. JAMES		32614614
Sgt.	ARNOLD 0. TROFTGRUBEN	17050020
Sgt.	JOHN E. EPLER	33503291
Cpl.	ROBERT P. HEYDT	33370980
Cpl.	SILVIO MARCANTONIO	32744069
Pvt.	WALLACE E. FASSOIS	32822789
Pvt.	GORDON L. HIGLEY	16071156

It might be noteworthy to mention at this time the heroic performances of 1st Sgt. JOHN C. MALONE, 16033961, and S/Sgt. ROBERT D. BUCKHOLZ, 12065789, in their attempts to get the injured and frightened men off the LST.

The bulk of the survivors was landed on Mindoro on 15 December; others went back to Leyte. Those who landed on Mindoro gathered at the 929th Signal Company who fed and clothed them and were extremely kind and generous, being very sympathetic

Personal accounts of the move from Leyte to Mindoro and the LST sinking are at the end of this chapter.

and helpful. One little sinking was not enough to dampen the spirits of the 418th, for they immediately set to work requisitioning (both moonlight and otherwise) equipment to continue operations and were assigned by the area engineer to an old Filipino graveyard for a bivouac area. Incidentally, this bivouac area is surrounded on three sides by an ammunition dump; so you can readily see that black cats mean nothing to us.

During the evening of 24 December, back in Morotai, Major Smith received a teletype from V Fighter Command, ordering a flight of P-61s to come to Mindoro as soon as possible. The airplanes took off with Major CARROLL C. SMITH, O-418144, our Commanding Officer, leading the flight. They landed at Tacloban, Leyte, that afternoon and spent the night there. Our Christmas meal consisted of Spam and cold dehydrated potatoes, supplemented by four bottles of beer each.

The flight then landed at Mindoro, the morning of 26 December, and prepared to set up operations for the night. General MacARTHUR had landed on Mindoro a few days prior to us and announced the place secure; however, we have our doubts and here is why. On the night of the 26 December, a Nip naval task force consisting of one pocket battleship, one cruiser and six destroyers rolled up off the coast of Mindoro and started to shell the beach; however, our air forces here were very impolite about the whole thing, sinking two destroyers and damaging the rest of the ships. At 2230, orders came from the 310th Bomb Wing that all available aircraft would take off and evacuate the strip, leaving for Tacloban. As we ran from the alert shack to our aircraft, we had to hit the dirt twice because the Nips were strafing and bombing the strip, and many narrow escapes were enjoyed. All ships took off and started to head for

Tacloban with the exception of Major SMITH and 1st Lt. PHILIP B. PORTER, O-888876, who relieved 1st Lt. ALBERT R. SORBO, O-740296, Pilot, and 2nd Lt. GEORGE N. KERSTETTER, O-88900, radar observer, who had been tracking the convoy on the airborne radar set and calling off its position to the bombers and fighters who were attacking it with great fury. Lt. SORBO, not having enough gas to go to Tacloban, came back and landed and spent the night here at Mindoro.

Here is one of those little incidents that will show you how small the world actually is. Major SMITH, in calling off the positions to our attacking air forces, had a long and lengthy discussion with "Crossbones" (17th Reconnaissance) and went so far as to confirm the sinking of one of the destroyers by this particular "Crossbones." It later turned out that "Crossbones 8" was none other than 2nd Lt. BISHOP M. KILGORE, a childhood chum of Major SMITH.

Major SMITH stayed over the task force until 0100, at which time he was ordered to leave by the area controller so that the ack-ack could open up on the Nip aircraft. He continued toward Tacloban and, finding the area cluttered up with other aircraft, landed at Valencia on an old strip lit up by jeep lights only about one hundred yards from the front lines. He took off the next morning and flew to Tacloban where he found that the rest of our crews and aircraft all were safe and intact. This was quite an achievement on our part and, for comparative reasons, we would like to tell of the 58th Fighter Group who didn't fare quite so well. Out of thirty-two planes sent out, only ten returned, most of this being due to inclement weather.

Our aircraft returned the next morning to Mindoro to find that the Nips had done us very little damage, and we prepared for operations that night. The next morning when the score was tallied, the Nips were minus three aircraft due to the valiant work of the night fighters. F/O VINCENT WERTIN, T-180224, had a field day. While flying with 1st Lt. MALCOLM L. RITCHIE, O-725795, Pilot, whose observer was sick, he shot down one Tony. F/O WERTIN then later on during the night, flying with his own pilot, 2nd Lt. BERTRAM C. TOMPKINS, O-754563, shot down two more Tonys.

On 29-30 December, the SMITH-PORTER combine went into action against the Nip and to Hirohito's amazement, consternation and chagrin shot down four Nips, bang, bang, bang, bang, elevating both SMITH and PORTER to the leading night fighter team in the Southwest Pacific; however, these were not the only Nips shot down that night. "Shorty" ELLINGS and MILT BERMAN, (2nd Lt. GEORGE M. ELLINGS, O-770213, pilot and F/O MILTON BURMAN, T-180281, Radar Observer) shot down the fifth Nip of the night, making our score eight ships in five days.

First Lt. ROBERT M. CLARK, O-649023, Statistical Officer, joined our organization (per Para. 10, Special Orders #362, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 27 December) on 30 December. Lt. CLARK is a Texan by birth and has spent approximately thirty months overseas with other organizations, being one of the first American soldiers in the Southwest Pacific.

Former S/Sgt. MIKE LIBERATORE (Medical Administrative Specialist) relates his story about the move from Leyte and his survival of the LST sinking: "After spending over two weeks on the beach of Leyte Island, our advanced echelon loaded aboard LST 738 for the move to Mindoro Island. After sitting off shore for two weeks in Leyte Gulf, being subjected to nightly visits by Nip air raids and anti-aircraft firing from ships and shore, we finally got underway and proceeded in a convoy of LSTs with Navy escort, heading to the western side of the Philippines. In the Sulu Sea, we sighted enemy aircraft and watched as two P-38s intercepted and hit two Nip planes. One Nip plunged into the sea. The other, being hit, went into a dive and crashed into the Light Cruiser Nashville. The cruiser, damaged, headed back to Samar Island Base for repairs. We heard through the LST radio that one of the P-38 pilots was Maj. Bong who had just shot down his 38th kill.

"Early on the morning of 15 December, most of the LSTs landed troops and equipment on Mindoro. LST 738, with two other LSTs, were waiting our turn to land. We were about a mile off shore when I removed my life jacket, thinking I wouldn't be needing it. Then, all hell broke loose when four or more Nip planes headed straight for us at deck level! One of the planes hit our LST just below the deck, about mid-ship on the starboard side. I reached out for my life jacket, but it was not where I left it; someone rushing past must have grabbed it! Looking around through the smoke and confusion, I couldn't find any spare life jackets. I'm not a good swimmer and everyone was going overboard. I finally decided to get off the LST. I climbed down a rope ladder to waistdeep in the water. Realizing I could not survive without a life jacket, I climbed back up onto the deck. By this time, smoke was so thick, I couldn't see anything. I found my way back to the rope ladder and was about to go back down and take my chances in the water when I saw one of our guys, *S/Sgt. EARL STOKER (medical NCO) trying to cut through the ropes holding a jammed life raft,* the only raft left on the LST. Thinking this was the only chance for me to get out of the mess alive, I got his attention and asked him to wait until I got down in the water again. Back down in the water, I gave him the sign to cut the raft loose. It came crashing down about twelve or fifteen feet from me. With all of my exhausted might, I was the first one on the raft. Within seconds, about twenty more guys tried to get on the raft and it began to sink. I told the guys to just hang onto the sides. After we pulled about fifty yards away from the LST, there was an explosion aboard the ship. We could see guys jumping off the deck into the water. About fifteen minutes later, we were picked up by an LSVP and taken to shore. I later heard that S/Sgt. Stoker also survived, was picked up by a Navy ship, was returned to Morotai Island, and later back to Mindoro Island."
Former T/Sgt. DAVID O. SULLIVAN, 13144652 (Communications Section), still vividly recalls the sinking of the LST: "I was standing on the starboard side of the deck about midships. There were many GI's on deck watching the advance ships proceed into shore, as LST 738 lay dead-inthe-water waiting our turn to go into the beach and unload. Suddenly out of the distant low mountain range there appeared this Jap aircraft, down on the deck, heading directly for the starboard side of the LST. The guns on board the LST opened up into him but he kept coming, and coming, and coming! As he got closer and closer, I pushed my way into a passageway, along with many others, trying to get to the port side, away from the incoming kamikaze. By the time I made the port side deck, the big 'boom' had occurred. It was not very long after I reached the port side that the order was given to 'abandon ship' as black smoke began raging out of the cargo deck. I headed for the fan tail and jumped overboard with my life jacket on, and I swam away from the burning ship, wondering if there were any other Japs coming on a strafing mission. I was probably in the water for more than thirty minutes when a Navy small boat came by and a Navy Chaplain fished me out. The LST was still burning furiously at that time, and I seem to recall seeing it still burning hours later after reaching shore. The Jap had penetrated the hull of the ship, almost hitting the circle in the top of the "8", where the number "738" was painted in large numbers at midship on the side. Like everyone else, I lost everything except that which I had on my back and in my pockets. One item in my shirt pocket was a small GI pocket Bible. After this experience, with a water soaked Bible over my heart and a Chaplain fishing me out of the water, I was feeling close to God, very lucky and very thankful."

# 13. An Odyssey and Mindoro Operations January 1945

n 4 January, two members of our Squadron turned up with this story which we submit for your interest and approval. At 2230 on 31 December 1944, Mac (Pvt. ALBERT M. McCULLOCH, 18034647, Radio Operator) and Bill (Cpl. WILLIAM D. THORNE, 1217273, Carpenter) took off in a C-46 from Morotai, NEI, headed for Mindoro, Philippine Islands. At 0600 on New Year's Day, the crew chief gently awakened the passengers, wished them a Happy New Year, and informed them that the aircraft was almost out of gas and was going to be ditched. The crew prepared the aircraft for ditching, throwing out with deep regrets the load of twenty-nine tents for which Capt. NORBERT J. DeBOER, O-574380, our Executive Officer, had shown particular solicitude at takeoff. In the process, Mac became entangled in the tent ropes and almost became ditched with the rest of the junk. Before the crash, the navigator, fresh from the States, briefed the crew, saying that they were off the northern tip of Leyte and that ten miles inland was a road leading directly to Tacloban. With only three minutes of gas left, the plane circled in a search for a suitable landing ground. On an island below a group of natives with a brood of children, lending a domestic touch, looked sufficiently friendly to encourage the pilot to risk his neck with them and, accordingly, he made a perfect landing a quarter mile offshore at 0750. In the eleven-minute interval while the plane sank, the boys unloaded life rafts, rations, blankets and supplies, while the natives paddled out in outriggers and threw ropes to the lifeboats to tow them to shore. Ashore, Mac checked the navigator's directions with a native and found that the navigator had been only one hundred and fifty miles off course. The island was not Leyte, but Mindanao.

The first job was to hide all yellow life rafts in preparation for any Nip snooping snipers. While the crew was thus occupied, a guerrilla lieutenant, who had been visiting on the island, arrived at the village to welcome the stranded crew. He pinpointed their location on the maps, informed the crew of the proximity of the Japs and hence the advisability of a trip to a safer island; thereupon, he sent two guerrillas to act as guides and six paddlers to do the dirty work. The group then loaded into three small outriggers and paddled for six hours, after which time they landed at a village on the shore of a small island. Immediately, they summoned the mayor and asked for transportation to Tacloban. Taking them at their word, the mayor sent them out with six rowers to his sailboat moored in the bay. The first day out the crew ate rations and tried to make themselves inconspicuous to the point of invisibility when the Nip planes flew overhead.

At dusk they anchored at another island. Mac, Bill, the radio operator, and the crew chief of the C-46 with two guerrilla M.P.s accepted the invitation of the natives on shore to wine and dine; i.e., tuba and tuba. Mac was only too willing. Sitting on a street corner, the crew were serenaded by luscious Filipino beauties and supplied with liberal quantities of tuba. At this point, the radio operator and crew chief left for the boat. The tuba had taken its toll, but Mac and Bill remained in their cups. As a climax in hospitality, the natives held a dance to the accompaniment of a mandolin. Bill, feeling mellow, joined a Filipino belle in, "Why Is The Sky An Ocean of Blue?," without finding the answer, and Mac formerly unable to dance did a Nijinski ballet all over the place. As time wore on, the tuba gave out and Mac passed out, so the guerrilla M.P.s hauled their charges back to the boat. Once aboard, Mac revived and decided to go swimming. The crew tried to discourage him, until, fully dressed, he broke away and dove

into the blue. Hauled aboard again, he piloted the firmly anchored ship through many mysterious and perilous channels over reefs and through typhoons to arrive in the place from which he had started.

Next morning as they were now in friendly waters, the guerrillas left the ship and the native crew paddled the survivors toward Tacloban. The survivors then displayed their yellow life raft covers and cranked the Gibson girl radio. By afternoon a convoy of ships appeared. A minesweeper with all guns trained on the small sailboat approached. Everyone stood up and waved. Convinced they were not Japs, the minesweeper drew near, picked up the survivors, and rejoined the convoy which Junior Commandos, Mac and Bill, regretted to learn was headed for a Luzon beachhead. For two days they were under continuous attack by Nip planes. It was a great relief to hear that a tanker in the convoy was to stop at Mindoro to refuel, so our two heroes boarded it, hoping to rejoin their outfit. At 1700 on 4 January 1945, a small boat took them ashore. Bursting with pride at their experiences and awaiting a glorious reception, they found their way to the Squadron and much to their chagrin only a lukewarm greeting, since the Squadron did not even know that they had ever left Morotai. But after impressing a sufficient number of the fellows by their honest faces and knocking out all Missouri skeptics, they had a reception befitting their experience, with tuba, American style, bringing balm to their weary minds.

On 1 January, Capt. ROBERT C. BLACKMAN, O-885365, and 1st Lt. JEAN B. HARPER, O-885363, of the 547th Night Fighter Squadron, were on loan to us to supplement our flying personnel. They took off on an intruder mission over Manila with the idea of catching a few Nips around their own dromes. They did not return from this mission and no other information concerning their whereabouts has turned up.

Capt. ROBERT C. BLACKMAN and 1st Lt. JEAN B. HARPER, on loan from the 547th NFS, lost on an intruder mission over Manila, previously had a confirmed victory with the 547th on 25 December 1944. In 1975, Roland Fisher visited the WW II memorial overlooking Manila Bay and took photos of their names on the marble marker.

Second Lt. GEORGE M. ELLINGS, O-770213, Pilot, and F/O MILTON BURMAN, T-180281, Radar Observer, while coming in to land on the night of 3 January, were joined in the traffic pattern by a Nip fighter and narrowly escaped being shot down. Our operations for this month continued on the magnificent scale as it had previously been. 1st Lt. ALBERT H. SORBO, O-740296, Pilot, having had several tries at Nips and firing up many rounds of ammunition, hit the jackpot on 4 January, at which time he and his observer, 2nd Lt. GEORGE N. KERSTETTER, O-88900, knocked down two Nips over the PT base, and next morning bright and early, the PT base commander came up with two cases of cold beer and made the statement at that time that he would supply one case of cold beer for every enemy plane knocked down over the PT base. This news was welcome to the ears of us "teetotalers" (??) and we all threatened to wait until the Nips got over the PT base before we shot them down from here on out. SORBO's luck did not stop with just two, for on the very next night while doing convoy cover near Lingayen, he shot down his third Nip.

January 7 was to see the uncharacteristic defeat of Major CARROLL C. SMITH, O-418144, and 1st Lt. PHILIP B. PORTER, O-888876, as a night fighter team. They set upon a Nip bomber with the



2nd Lt. George M. Ellings (P-left) and F/O Milton Burman (RO-right). (Pape)

intention of shooting him down, but to their embarrassment, the Nip had other ideas. As they closed and circled in screaming turns trying to see the Nip, Tojo opened fire, not once but six times, and the Smith-Porter combine failed to get even one shot. They lift their hats to the Nip and want to buy him a drink before they kill him when next they meet.

Second Lt. JAMES R. McQUEEN, O-755987, Pilot, and 2nd Lt. HUGH L. GORDON, JR., O-551348, radar observer, while covering convoys around Lingayen (Luzon, P.I.) on 8

January, stumbled on a formation of four Nip bombers with their lights on, shooting down two of them, scaring daylights out of the other two who jettisoned their bombs and took off.

The historian "volunteer" at the time may have confused a report of seeing exhaust flames from the Nip bombers; it is ludicrous to suggest any aircraft formation in a combat zone would fly with "lights on!" The report filed 9 January 1945 by McQueen says: "At 0530, while on patrol over convoy, I was given a 90 deg. vector by Fighter Director Ship on a bogey approaching from the east directly at the convoy. We were then given a vector of 270 deg. and came out on the tail of the bogey which proved to be four bandits flying in formation. I fired a long burst into the bandit on the left and then turned and fired a long burst into the second bandit from the left. The first bandit went into a diving turn and I followed him, getting in a good full deflection shot causing him to trail fire and crash into the water. I then pulled up and saw the second bandit below us. I then dove on him and fired a long burst from 1,500 feet. I observed hits and watched him burst into flames just above the water." The other two planes turned and dove but were not followed because of being out of ammunition.

These four crews: Major CARROLL C. SMITH, O-418144, and 1st Lt. PHILIP B. PORTER, O-888876; 2nd Lt. CARL R. TIDRICK, O-762555, and 2nd Lt. MORTIMER I. GOLDSTEIN, O-870610; 1st Lt. MALCOLM L. RITCHIE, O-725795, and F/0 HAROLD E. Mc BRIDE, T-180216; and 1st Lt. ALBERT R. SORBO, O-740296, and 2nd Lt. GEORGE N. KERSTETTER, O-88900, have a story to tell about coming back from the dead. On 10 January, while covering our task force in Lingayen Gulf, they were chasing a Nip right over the middle of the convoy at 2,000 feet, when the convoy decided that they had joined the Nip air force and opened fire. You may quote any one of the four as to how much flak four hundred naval vessels can throw up. You might also ask them about the waltz they did on top of it; it was that thick. Employing every bit of evasive action known to mankind, all four escaped with only two ships, those of Lt. SORBO and Lt. TIDRICK, picking up holes. Brother, if that ain't coming back from the dead, I'm nuts.

On 15 January, the bells rang for it had finally happened. Capt. WILLIAM B. SELLERS, O-407126, with his observer, 2nd Lt. HORACE E. HOLLIDAY, O-557901, joined our Squadron (per Par 3, Special Orders, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, APO 710, dated 9 January 1945) to relieve Major

SMITH as Commanding Officer and let the Major do a little bit of fat cattin' in the States.

On 16 January, S/Sgt. ROLAND N. DAWLEY, JR., 19002544, joined the Squadron as a replacement (per Para. 6, Special Orders #1, Headquarters, 85th Fighter Wing, dated 1 January 1945). Send us more over; they are always welcome.

Upon post-war reflection, the seventeen enemy aircraft shot down by 418th Night Fighter Squadron crews in the three-month period of November 1944 through January 1945 evidently made the Japanese command not willing to further risk their dwindling aircraft supply to the P-61 threat. During night patrols in February, when GCI picked up a distant "bogey," and began radioing vectoring instructions to our night fighters, the "bogey" would turn back and leave the area. During the many uneventful subsequent night convoy and beachhead cover missions, it is suggested that the coordinating radio traffic alerted the enemy to our presence, which was enough to discourage enemy attacks, and accomplished the objectives of our missions.

#### 14. Ten Replacement Crews Invade Mindoro February 1945

he end of January provided the long-deferred relief from flying for the established crews of the Squadron with the arrival of four new pilots and five radar observers. The "freshmen" were pilots: 1st Lt. EARL R. BRADLEY, O-726622, Morehead, Kentucky; 2nd Lt. STANLEY E. LOGAN, O-770332, Chicago, Illinois; 2nd Lt. DONALD H. ARMSTRONG, O-773985, Buffalo, New York; 2nd Lt. JOHN D. AGAN, O-746007, Rochester, New York; and their respective radar observers: F/O JAMES L. DICKEY, T-180270, Buckhead, Georgia; F/O GEORGE K. KAMAJIAN, T-180274, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; F/O JAMES J. LALLY, T-180252, Boston, Massachusetts; and F/O HUBERT HUTCHINSON, JR., T-180100, Newark, New Jersey. F/O REUBEN CAMPBELL, T-180282, of Idaho Falls, Idaho, arrived without his pilot, 2nd Lt. PAUL D. FRIDLEY, O-770237, who was left with the remainder of the eight crews in Nadzab, New Guinea, when the above crews departed rather hastily (per Para. 9, Special Orders 25, Headquarters, 360 Service Group, dated 25 January 1945).

The rest of the new crews arrived on the 3rd and 6th to the unbounded joy of both factions, for the first crews to leave Nadzab had taken all the others' baggage, including mess kits. The late arrivals were 2nd Lt. JACK W. EGGINTON, O-770210, Ogden, Utah; 2nd Lt. NORRIS W. GALLAWAY, O-767040, Austin, Texas, pilots, and their observers, F/O RICHARD L. EBBERT, T-180291, Sandy Lake, Pennsylvania, and F/O CECIL L. EASEY, T-192929 (per Para. 5, Special Orders 33, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 2 February 1945). The remainder of the crews: 2nd Lt. ARILD C. NIELSON, O-767341, Missoula, Montana; 2nd Lt. SPENCER M. PORTER, O-770113, Omaha, Nebraska; 2nd Lt. EDWARD F. TRAVERSE, O-770478, Eureka, California, pilots, and their observers, F/O EMMET A. PIETZ, T-180317, Galveston, Texas; F/O HERBERT C. VAUGHN, T-180328, Miami, Florida; 2nd Lt. ROBERT D. HERZBERGER, O-871750, Kenmore, New York, and the missing pilot, 2nd Lt. PAUL D. FRIDLEY, O-770237, Akron, Ohio, arrived a few days later (per Para. 9, Special Orders 25, Headquarters, 360 Service Group, dated 25 January 1945).

Enlisted additions joining the Squadron at this time were Sgts. HAROLD G. ERNST, 33459295, automotive equipment mechanic (per Para. 11, Special Orders 12, Headquarters, 92nd Replacement Bn.



Flight line on dirt strip on Mindoro. (Vaughn)

(AAF), APO 714, dated 15 January 1945); GLENN E. PUTNAM, 39082288, airplane mechanic (per Para. 1, Special Orders 22, Headquarters, 11th Replacement Bn. (AAF), dated 4 December 1944); and MILTON A. RICHSTEIN, 37086535, cook (per Para. 1, Special Orders 18, Headquarters, 92nd Replacement Bn. (AAF), APO 714, dated 24 January 1945); Pfc. JOHN R. THOMAS, 33376844, automotive equipment mechanic (per Para. 1,

Special Orders 355, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, APO 72, dated 20 December 1944); and Pvts. RALPH E. PETERSON, 38433811, classification clerk (per Para. 11, Special Orders 12, Headquarters, 92nd Replacement Bn. (AAF) (P), APO 714, dated 15 January 1945); and Pvt. WARREN C. STARK,

18106547, automotive equipment mechanic (per Para. 5, Special Orders 21, Headquarters, 85th Fighter Wing, APO 72, dated 12 February 1945).

From the first of the month through the sixteenth, we were engaged in flying local patrols and convoy covers, at which time the "rookies" also took the opportunity to run practice interceptions on each other. After much island-chasing, they finally discerned the targets, and various and sundry shaky interceptions were attempted. The general consensus in this area was that it was fortunate for us that all the Nip aircraft had already vacated. On the sixteenth, all crews were informed that they would cover Manila that night. As usual, in fifteen minutes rumor had informed everyone that it was to be a "suicide mission" expressly for the purpose of drawing Jap anti-aircraft fire; however, Capt. LEON O. GUNN, O-885480, our Operations Officer, hastily assured the crews that this was not the case, that the flight was only to circle Jap positions, the idea being that the sound of our engines would silence or at least lessen their fire. With many misgivings, the "freshmen" undertook the missions, but after several uneventful nights, the glamorous Manila patrols were reduced to drab routine. Much Jap and American fire was observed, however, and in some cases valuable information concerning Nip emplacements was imparted to American batteries by the night fighters. No bogies were observed. For the remainder of the month, flights were confined to the usual convoy covers and local patrols.

The deprecating attempt at humor by the historian at this time belies the fact that all of the ten new crews joining the Squadron this month each had well over one-hundred hours of P-70 flight time and fifty hours of P-61 time, with months of training in night fighter tactics. All new crews hit the ground on Mindoro running (or flying) and ready and eager to go! The "drab routine" of Manila patrols included watching out for Jap barrage balloons known to be in the area, occasionally being ordered up to 15,000 feet to avoid trajectories from 155mm guns, serving as artillery spotters to correct fire from U.S. artillery on Jap batteries and vehicle convoys, reporting the first launch of a rocket-propelled Jap missile, and encountering small-caliber anti-aircraft fire.

At this time, the first tragedy for the new arrivals occurred. 2nd Lt. JOHN D. AGAN, O-746007, and his observer, F/O HUBERT HUTCHINSON, JR., T-180100, were killed when their aircraft struck an oil truck on the runway. This calamity was taken very much to heart by all, their casual as well as intimate acquaintances, for they had already established themselves as one of the best-liked and hardest-working crews in the Squadron.

This month saw several of the our best enlisted men and officers leave the Squadron. S/Sgts. RAYMOND T. FRENCH, 6914612, and GEORGE L. DeHAVEN, 12168355; Sgts. RUSSELL F. RECTOR, 10096446, and JAMES W. PILLING, 33170380; Pfc. RAYMOND F. CURRAM, 39600307; Pvt. ERICH R. LUNDSTROM, 32507308 (per Para. 1, Special Orders 24, Headquarters V Fighter Command, 24 January 1945); and Pvt. GORDON L. HIGLEY, JR., 16071156 (per Para. 3, Special Orders 47, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 16 February 1945), all gunners, went to the

421st Night Fighter Squadron. Sgt. JOHN R. DUNLAP, JR., 6958285; Cpl. NORMAN E. GOLDEN, 11094324; and Cpl. VASILIOS N. KARTSOTIS, 33367811; three radio operators, were transferred to the 35th Fighter Control Squadron (per Para. 3, Special Orders 43, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 12 February 1945).

The lucky enlisted men to return to the mythical "States" this month were S/Sgt. PHILIP F. DANIELS, 16018486, airplane mechanic, and Sgt. ARNOLD C. TROFTGRUBEN, 17050020, personnel clerk (per Para. 3, Special Orders 38, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 7 February 1945) as well as the aerial gunners T/Sgt. MICHAEL A. CAPITTI, 32324345; S/Sgts. JAMES E. BROBERG, 33247921; ROBERT D. BUCKHOLZ, 12065789; CHESTER P. CIEPLINSKI, 32380964; LOWELL E. EICH, 37449549; and WILLIAM D. MAYO, 34407099 (per Para. 1, Special Orders 38, Headquarters, Far East Air Forces, dated 7 February 1945).

The flying officers transferred "overseas" to the U.S. were Major CARROLL C. SMITH, O-418144, our Commanding Officer (per Para. 1, Special Orders 46, Headquarters, Far East Air Forces, dated 15 February 1945); 1st Lt. PHILIP B. PORTER, O-888876; F/O THOMAS R. WRIGHT, T-180062 (per Para. 3, Special Orders 46, Headquarters, Far East Air Forces, dated 15 February 1945); 1st Lt. RAYMOND L. DURTHMAN, O-530246 (per Para. 4, Special Orders 54, Headquarters, Far East Air Forces, dated 23 February 1945); 1st Lt. WILLIAM A. FOSTER, O-7466074 (per Para. 1, Special Orders 37, Headquarters, Far East Air Forces, dated 6 February 1945; 1st Lt. IRA M. BARNETT, O-746022; 1st Lt. FRANK M. DUBASIK, O-888872; 1st Lt. BARNEY N. SKILLE, O-740291 (per Para. 1, Special Orders 37, Headquarters, Far East Air Forces, dated 6 February 1945); 2nd Lt. KENNETH P. RITTER, O-888982; 2nd Lt. NORMAN HOROWITZ, O-888980 (per Para. 1, Special Orders 39, Headquarters, Far East Air Forces, dated 8 February 1945); 1st Lt. FRANK G. YOUNG, O-743558; 2nd Lt. RAYMOND J. BURKE, O-888875 (per Para. 1, Special Orders 35, Headquarters, Far East Air Forces, dated 4 February 1945); and 1st Lt. WILLIAM F. ROSS, O-745943 (per Para. 1, Special Orders 35, Headquarters, Far East Air Forces, dated 4 February 1945). Everyone of these boys will be sorely missed, but none more so than Major SMITH. He is to date the outstanding U.S. night fighter ace of the war and has done more to put night fighting on the map than any one man in the Air Forces. His successor, however, Capt. WILLIAM B. SELLERS, O-407126, has the Major's sincerest recommendation as the best possible man to command the Squadron and uphold its enviable reputation.

The Squadron honors this month are something terrific. Several belated tributes and medals came through for men no longer attached to the 418th. Letters of Commendation, Air Medals, Oak-Leaf Clusters, and the Distinguished Flying Cross all combined to swell the prestige of the Squadron. The following officers were awarded Air Medals or Bronze Oak-Leaf Clusters for meritorious achievement in sustained operational flight missions in this theater: 1st Lt. FRANK G. YOUNG, O-743558; 1st Lt. ELDON D. AYRES, O-743302; Major CARROLL C. SMITH, O-418144; Capt. LEON O. GUNN, O-885480; 2nd Lt. NORMAN HOROWITZ, O-888980; 1st Lt. PHILIP B. PORTER, O-888876; 2nd Lt. KENNETH P. RITTER, O-888982; 1st Lt. HAROLD B. WHITTERN, O-740320; 1st Lt. BARNEY N. SKILLE, O-740291; 2nd Lt. ELWOOD H. GARDNER, O-888979; and 2nd Lt. BUNYAN A. CRAIN, JR., O-888869.

Major CARROLL C. SMITH, O-418144, received his second Oak-Leaf Cluster for a successful night interception over Morotai Island on 7 October 1944, for which action his radar observer, 1st Lt. PHILIP B. PORTER, O-888876, received his first Bronze Oak-Leaf Cluster.

Air Medals awarded for the destruction of enemy shipping on the west coast of Halmahera Island on 5 August 1944 came to 1st Lt. ELDON D. AYRES, O-743302, and his crew; 1st Lt. FRANK M. DUBASIK, O-888872, observer; S/Sgt. WILLIAM D. MAYO, 34407099, aerial gunner; and S/Sgt. LAMAR W. PEEL, 18053576, radio operator.

First Lt. ALBERT SORBO. R. O-740296, had the Distinguished Flying Cross conferred upon him for participation in a strike against Jap shipping on 27 July 1944 during which heavy enemy anti-aircraft fire was encountered over McCluer Gulf, Dutch New Guinea, causing one of our planes to crash land in the jungle. Lt. SORBO sank a ship and proceeded to search for the downed B-25. Upon locating it, he directed rescue operations. His crew, 2nd Lt. GEORGE N. KERSTETTER, O-888900. observer; Sgt. LEONARD S. RUNTON, 33169723, radio operator; and Pfc. RAYMOND F. CURRAN, 39689307, gunner, all received Air



New Commanding Officer, Capt. William B. Sellers (Pilot, right), with his RO, 2nd Lt. Horace E. Holliday (left). (Pape)

Medals. Other crews who had engaged in this operation over McCluer Gulf received Letters of Commendation: 1st Lt. BARNEY N. SKILLE, O-740291; 1st Lt. FRANK G. YOUNG, O-743558; 2nd Lt. NORMAN HOROWITZ, O-888980; S/Sgt. WILLIAM D. MAYO, 34407099; and Cpl. LESTER J. PECKLER, 37461732. Letters of Commendation also went to the four stranded crew members: 1st Lt. IRA M. BARNETT, O-746022; F/O THOMAS R. WRIGHT, T-180062; Sgt. PETER P. WHIPLAND, 12203192; and Pfc. HAROLD A. QUIDGEON, 31193866, to complete this month's shower of awards and decorations.

#### 15. Convoy and Beachhead Cover March 1945

The new crews, having been duly broken in and oriented, assumed the major portion of the flying for March. Almost all of the missions this month were convoy covers. After a few of these "milk runs," the later additions to the Squadron were chafing for some action with the Japs. At this time, a slight break in the routine occurred when we were assigned to cover the landings on Lubang and Palawan Islands. These missions proved singularly uneventful, except a bit of excitement accorded 2nd Lt. PAUL D. FRIDLEY, O-770237, when he suddenly discerned twelve Japanese Q-boats in Tilik Bay at Lubang. Undecided as to which course he should pursue, he found his dilemma solved by a call from the ground station informing him that the boats had been captured and were being used by the U.S. Navy. Also, on this mission several destroyed Nip aircraft were observed.

A most unexpected and tragic occurrence befell the Squadron when 2nd Lt. DONALD H. ARMSTRONG, O-773985, and his observer F/O JAMES J. LALLY, T-180252, experienced a high-speed stall close to the ground over the Jap strip at San Jose, Panay, and crashed northwest of the field. 2nd Lt. SPENCER M. PORTER, O-710113, who observed the accident, returned and directed our Commanding Officer, WILLIAM B. SELLERS, O-407126, to the position of the wrecked aircraft. It was found to be almost completely demolished except for a small portion of the crew nacelle. The entire Squadron awaited apprehensively the report from the guerrilla radio operating near San Jose, for the plane had gone down between Japanese and Filipino-held positions. Finally, the guerrillas informed us that ARMSTRONG had been killed and LALLY, badly injured, was in the hands of the enemy. There has been no further news to date.

HERBERT VAUGHN recalls: "On Friday, 16 March 1945, Lt. SPENCER PORTER and I, F/O HERBERT VAUGHN, were the second element of a two-plane cover for a convoy off the coast of Panay. The first element was Lt. ARMSTRONG and F/O LALLY. After leaving the convoy, we both flew over San Jose, Panay, to look at some old bombed Japanese planes. Suddenly we realized that Lt. ARMSTRONG's plane was missing. We circled and saw that the plane had crashed, but had not burned. We saw no sign of life. At the time, we did not know whether the plane had crashed in Japanese or Guerilla territory, but we did know that there was fighting going on around there. On 6 April 1945, there were memorial services for Lt. ARMSTRONG; word had previously filtered back that F/O LALLY had not been killed during the crash. On 19 September 1945, after the war ended, Lt. PORTER and I were sent back to Panay to try to verify what had happened to ARMSTRONG and LALLY. At first we could find out nothing. About 5:00 P.M. the next day, intelligence received some interrogations from captured Japanese that verified everything. Lt. ARMSTRONG had been killed when they crashed. F/O LALLY had been injured, but had been treated for several days by the Japanese. He was eventually beheaded." A news item a year or so after the war reported that the perpetrators were the first ones convicted at the war crimes trials. On 16 March, we resumed convoy covers until 31 March when Capt. WILLIAM B. SELLERS, O-407126, gave the P-61 its baptism of fire as a low-level intruder. Loaded with one 250-pound demolition bomb, Capt. SELLERS and his observer, 2nd Lt. HORACE E. HOLLIDAY, O-557901, took off for Legaspi, Luzon. Upon reaching the target area, Capt. SELLERS released his bomb in the center of the town of Legaspi, causing a large fire. He then made several strafing runs on various targets in the bay area, after which he returned to the base.

The same night, 2nd Lt. JACK H. EGGINTON, O-770210, and his observer, F/O RICHARD L. EBBERT, T-180291, ran into a little difficulty coming home from convoy cover near Legaspi. EBBERT's radar was giving him trouble, the weather was bad, fuel was low, and to top it off, the compass was off fully sixty degrees. EGGINTON, displaying great presence of mind, managed to obtain a steer back to the base from the convoy he had been covering. Due to lack of fuel, however, it

was impossible to return all the way to Mindoro. Finally, Iloilo strip on Panay was spotted with a lighted jeep at either end. Lt. EGGINTON then brought his plane in to a perfect landing with practically no visual aid, a feat which is some flying in anyone's book. After landing, he and F/O EBBERT were royally entertained by the Infantry, who had only taken the airstrip the previous day. The errant pair

Night cover of convoys and beachheads in late March were for the 1 April 1945 invasion of the Legaspi Peninsula, an extremity of Luzon, P.I., to the southeast.

returned to the Squadron a few days later, laden with many souvenirs and glowing accounts of the town of Iloilo with its abundance of wine, women and song. Or perhaps the song was forgotten.

Second Lt. STANLEY E. LOGAN, O-770332, suddenly became one of the most discussed men in the Squadron when he produced during a week, not one, but six rat traps, all of his own design. Each of these traps featured a different lethal device, and all of them contained features which indicated a diabolical mind and ruthless disposition in the originator. It was then that Lt. LOGAN experienced a blow that would crush the spirit of any less intrepid rat-trapper. A rat, evidently uninformed of the amount of creative energy lavished upon him, wandered by all six of Lt. LOGAN's intricate mechanisms, fell into a helmet half-filled with water, and there he was found the next morning, dead, the only victory of the night. LOGAN persevered, however, added a few improvements to his traps, and now has the enviable record of six rats and three probables.

19 March was a red-letter day for five of our boys: Capt. LEON O. GUNN, O-885980; 2nd Lt. BUNYAN A. CRAIN, JR., O-888869; 2nd Lt. ARVEL M. LAKE, O-1686267; 2nd Lt. CHESTER L. PATRICK, O-1686359; and 2nd Lt. WILLIAM F. SHERMAN, O-888983, received their orders returning them to the States (per Para. 4, Special Orders 73, Headquarters, Far East Air Forces, dated 14 March 1945). By some odd and fortunate quirk of fate, the Squadron received its long-awaited beer ration that day. A gala blow-out was given in Lt. SHERMAN's tent. Capt. GUNN was master of ceremonies and chief beer opener, as well as choral director. Among songs presented were such perennial favorites as "Orbiting the Beacon," "The Bloody Great Wheel," and the "RO's Song." In order to quiet the revelers in preparation for the next song, Capt. GUNN was forced several times to issue strange and bizarre commands (unprintable here) that I am sure are not to be found in the I.D.R. As the party waxed wilder, all the officers in the Squadron were summoned (a most inappropriate word) to join in the celebration. Capt. HENRY S. HOWE, O-572080, Radar Officer, developed a sudden and definite







Lt. Paul D. Fridley (P-left) and F/O Reuben Campbell (RO-right). (Vaughn)

Left: Lt. Spencer M. Porter (P-left) and F/O Herbert C. Vaughn (RO-right). (Vaughn)



F/O Emmet A. Pietz, RO. (Vaughn)

Left: Lt. Stanley E. Logan (P-right) and F/O George K. Kamajian (RO-left). (Logan)

pugilistic prowess when his much needed beauty sleep was disturbed, but was finally lured with much beer to participate in the festivities. Just before dawn, at the conclusion of one of the wildest nights ever seen on Mindoro, 2nd Lt. CHESTER PATRICK, O-1686359, was unanimously awarded the beer-can cluster. It was a night to remember.

Sgt. LLOYD A. DAVEY, 35530015, Duty Sergeant, was transferred to this organization from the 421st Night Fighter Squadron (per Para. 10, Special Orders 74, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 18 March 1945), and Cpl. DAVID K. MORISON, 17089914, draftsman, joined the Squadron on 18 March (per Para. 1, Special Orders 77, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 18 March (per Para. 1, Special Orders 77, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 18 March (per Para. 1, Special Orders 77, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 18 March (per Para. 1, Special Orders 77, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 18 March 1945). At this time, 1st Lt. PAUL F. HARRINGTON, O-746100, one of our flight leaders and ablest pilots, together with his equally able observer, 2nd Lt. WARREN EASTWICK, O-1686357, was returned to the States (orders respectively, per Para. 1, Special Orders 59, Headquarters, Far East Air Forces, dated 28 February 1945, and per Para. 2, Special Orders 57, Headquarters, Far East Air Forces, dated 26 February 1945).

Air Medals or Oak-Leaf Clusters were awarded to the following for participating in sustained operational flight missions in the Southwest Pacific Area: 2nd Lt. HOWARD C. DALBEY, O-870607; 2nd Lt. GEORGE M. ELLINGS, O-770213; 1st Lt. ROBERT A. McMASTER, O-749570; 2nd Lt. MORTIMER I. GOLDSTEIN, O-870610; F/O HAROLD D. McBRIDE, T-180216; 1st Lt. GEORGE H. WILLIAMS, JR., O-763803; 1st Lt. JAMES R. McQUEEN, O-755987; F/O HOMER F. MOSELEY, T-192888; 1st Lt. CARL R. TIDRICK, O-762555; 2nd Lt. WILLIAM F. SHERMAN, O-888983; 1st Lt. MARVIN H. DENNIS, O-750553; 2nd Lt. NORMAN HOROWITZ, O-888980; S/Sgt. WILLIAM D. MAYO, 34407099; S/Sgt. ROBERT D. BUCKHOLZ, 12065789; and Capt. RICHARD F. DAY, O-885216.

First Lt. HAROLD B. WHITTERN, O-740320, and his observer, 2nd Lt. BUNYAN A. CRAIN, JR., O-888869, also received Air Medals for destroying an enemy aircraft over Halmahera Island, Netherlands East Indies, on 13 November 1944.

Our former Commanding Officer, Major CARROLL C. SMITH, O-418144, besides his third Oak-Leaf Cluster for sustained operational flights, received the Silver Star for his unparalleled and now almost legendary feat of destroying four enemy aircraft in one night. The account of this flight is treated elsewhere in this history.

### 16. Training; Clubs are Built April 1945

Ithough combat flying for the month of April was at a minimum, every night and every airplane was utilized in an extensive training course inaugurated by Capt. WILLIAM B. SELLERS, O-407126, our Commanding Officer. These missions proved of immense benefit to the old as well as the new crews, as all were more or less rusty from the enforced inactivity. GCI directed all missions, thus insuring the absolute maximum of simulated combat. After the interceptions were completed, the overlays from GCI were forwarded to the respective crews in order to acquaint them with their shortcomings. After a few of these runs, a remarkable improvement could be discerned on the overlays, both in length and quality of interceptions. Enthusiasm as well as ability soared. All crews were supremely confident concerning the inevitable coming conflict.



Flying personnel on Mindoro. From Fifth Air Force "Pacific Sweep" (Liberatore)

Upon the return of 1st Lt. RAYMOND L. DUETHMAN, O-530246, to the States, 2nd Lt. VINCENT WERTIN, O-2007557, became chief Radar Observer. WERTIN'S record as an observer is nothing short of astounding. Not only did he and his pilot, 1st Lt. BERTRAM C. TOMPKINS, O-754563, destroy three Japanese aircraft, two of them in one night, but WERTIN himself demonstrated his versatility by flying with Capt. MALCOLM L. RITCHIE, O-725795, and bagging another to boost his total to four confirmed victories. His appointment as chief RO was heartily approved by all, and he has since proven his ability in that line, being instrumental as a supervisor in the aforementioned training program.

After several showers which thoroughly doused all personnel of the Squadron, it was unanimously decided to provide all living quarters with wooden floors. All possible sources of wood were tapped, ranging from frag-bomb boxes to an abandoned Aussie latrine near Murtha Strip. This latter, however, was not recommended by F/O GEORGE K. KAMAJIAN, T-180274, and F/O JAMES L. "Jeeter" DICKEY, T-180270, who were responsible. By the end of the month, most of the tents were in good shape, and we await the raining season without trepidation.

At this time, a meeting was called among the officers to ascertain ways and means of providing an officers club. After vainly and desperately attempting to sink into the ground, 2nd Lt. SPENCER M. PORTER, O-770113, was nominated by Capt. SELLERS to construct the edifice. By dint of cajolery, exorbitant descriptions of wild parties replete with lovely nurses, threats of withholding all liquor from shirkers, and sundry other verbal means, PORTER finally assembled a reluctant work detail composed of most of the officers in the Squadron, except "Doc," Capt. ROWLAND H. ROBERTSON, JR., O-482794. It is to Lt. PORTER'S everlasting credit that he was able to wheedle any work at all out of such a motley aggregation. At this time, work is going ahead painfully but surely, and promises a grade "A" boozing place sometime in the near future. The enlisted men's club has already been completed, and there on any night of the week may be seen Sgt. LESTER J. PECKLER, 37461732, radio operator-mechanic, Pfc. ROBERT A. FLINT, 32487776, supply clerk, and Pfc. ARTHELUS M. KELLY, 18054534, engineering clerk, imbibing fabulous quantities of 65-proof Manila whisky.

On 3 April, the Squadron was deprived of the services of one of its ablest and most conscientious ground officers when Capt. NORBERT J. DeBOER, O-574380, was transferred to the 310th Bomb Wing (Para. 3, Special Orders #93, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, APO 710, dated 3 April 1945). He will be sorely missed. His place as Executive Officer was taken by 1st Lt. ROBERT A. WALTERS, O-570668, who proceeded to continue the high standards previously set by Capt. DeBOER.

The first sweepstakes winner of tickets to the States was 1st Lt. GEORGE KERSTETTER, O-888900 (Para.1, Special Orders #101, Headquarters, FEAF, dated 11 April 1945). Lt. KERSTETTER was one of the most efficient navigators in the Squadron as well as a top-flight RO. The exploits of him and his pilot, Capt. ALBERT R. SORBO, O-740296, have been acclaimed elsewhere in this history. A perusal of their record will incite considerable admiration in any reader. Also on the receiving end of dream tickets were Capt. HAROLD B. WHITTERN, O-740320, and 1st Lt. LINN W. LEDFORD, O-677789 (Para. 1, Special Orders #116, Headquarters, FEAF, APO 925, dated 26 April 1945). Capt. WHITTERN has been Operations Officer after the departure of Capt. LEON O. GUNN, O-885480. He was acclaimed the hottest and most fearless pilot in the outfit, as well as one of the squarest shooters in his dealing with members of the Squadron.

Lt. LEDFORD caused the sons of Nippon considerable discomfort before he was hospitalized by an unfortunate jeep accident. He was kept in Sydney for several months, though, which is not such an untoward fate. Both boys were major cogs in the Squadron.

Evacuated to the States for sickness were Cp1. ROBERT P. HEYDT, 33370980, automotive mechanic, and Pfc. WALLACE W. FASSOIS, 32822789, duty soldier. Their shipping orders are unobtainable. At the same time, a worthy addition to the Squadron was Pvt. CHARLES M. SIROMBORN, 32365908, a teletype operator (Para. 8, Special Orders #43, Headquarters, 85th Fighter Wing, APO 72, dated 11 April 1945).

Belated honors came to the following during the month of April: S/Sgt. LOWELL E. EICH, 37449549; lst Lt. HENRY N. INGWERSEN, O-750600; 2nd Lt. CHESTER L. PATRICK, O-1686359; and 1st. Lt. BERTRAM C. TOMPKINS, O-754563, received Air Medals (GO #471, FEAF, dated 3 April 1945) as did 1st Lts. RAYMOND L. DUETHMAN, O-530246, and GEORGE KERSTETTER, O-888900 (GO #457, FEAF, dated 29 March 1945). Other "Junior Birdmen" were F/O CHARLES E.

HENRY, T-180153; 2nd Lt. HORACE E. HOLLIDAY, O-557901; 2nd Lt. WILLIAM R. RITCHEY, O-2007549; Capt. ALBERT SORBO, O-740296; and 1st Lt. PHILIP B. PORTER, O-888876 (GO #457, FEAF, dated 29 March 1945). Capt. MALCOLM L. RITCHIE, O-725795, received an Air Medal replete with Cluster (same order as above), thus rounding out this "strange eventful history" for the month of April.

There was an expectation of long night intruder missions starting in the near future. Some of these missions might start at dusk or be completed at dawn, when there was vulnerability from Nip day fighters. A day fighter pilot was brought in from a nearby unit to give our night fighter pilots a quick course in day fighter tactics, requiring an element of two aircraft to provide mutual protection. Our CO, Capt. WILLIAM B. SELLERS, found a P-40 somewhere and delighted in "jumping" us without warning while we were up on routine local daytime flights to see how many evasive mistakes we might make. This quickly demonstrated the difficulty of shaking an attacker when one doesn't have a wingman close by.



*Capt. Sellers in his P-40, named "Rusty" after his young son. (Pape)* 

With the expectation of night intruder missions to come, 1st Lt. STANLEY E. LOGAN proposed developing a technique for use of A.I. (Aircraft Interception) radar in bombing. LOGAN recalled being able to detect oil well derricks and locomotives in the California desert during training. With RO, 2nd Lt. GEORGE K. KAMAJIAN, they flew dry runs on a small (deserted) island near the Mindoro coast in late April and again in May, and decided the method was feasible once the required slant distances were determined. LOGAN obtained bomb tables for several types of bombs from a nearby bomb outfit, and hand-calculated the slant distances from the tabulated altitude and angle values. Later, in June, after practice bombs were obtained, radar bombing was successfully demonstrated and put into practice.

#### 17. Tragic Accident May 1945

Iving for this month, with one notable exception, was confined to a continuation of the training program begun in April. Practice bombing was included in the program with fair-to-good results.

On 17 May, Capt. WILLIAM B. SELLERS, O-407126, our Commanding Officer, together with his Observer, 2nd Lt. HORACE E. HOLLIDAY, O-557901, and 2nd Lt. VINCENT WERTIN, O-2007557, acting as gunner, took off on a mission to bomb Taihoku City in northern Formosa. Upon arriving at the target, several batteries of searchlights opened up in an attempt to spot the night fighter, but, as Capt. SELLERS said, "They were waving all over the bloody sky and never got us once." After evading the searchlights and aided by Lt. HOLLIDAY's direction determined by radar, Capt. SELLERS proceeded to drop his 1,000 lb. general purpose bomb in what appeared to be the center of the town. The bomb was not seen to explode, but in view of the carefully thought-out procedure by which it was dropped, it is very likely that the target was hit.

Several nights later, 1st Lt. ROBERT A. McMASTER, O-749570; his Observer, 2nd Lt. OMER F. MOSELEY, O-2007544; 2nd Lt. MORRIS W. GALLAWAY, O-767040; and his RO, F/O CECIL L. EASEY, T-192929, were running practice interceptions in the vicinity of Murtha Airstrip. After a surprise call from sector informing them of an unidentified aircraft northwest of their position, Lt. GALLAWAY was vectored by GCI to a position approximately two miles behind the bogey. F/O EASEY's set then blew a fuse and during the interim Lt. McMASTER began an interception, but was unable to obtain a radar contact. By this time the bogey was out of GCI range. Both night fighters then returned to base.

The 31st of May was indeed a tragic date for the 418th. T/Sgt. ANDREW J. COBB, 34336058, crew chief, and Cpl. DAVID MARKOWITZ, 33600770, camera technician, were both killed by the accidental discharge of a 20mm. cannon mounted in the aircraft on which they were working. The effect of this happening on the personnel of the 418th cannot be described. T/Sgt. COBB was one of the most reliable crew chiefs on the line and greatly beloved by all who knew him. Cpl. MARKOWITZ, though a recent addition to the Squadron, had already established himself as a technician, as well as an exceedingly fine man. Sgt. JASPER M. PIERCE, 34179074, was injured in the accident, but luckily was not killed. He was hospitalized.

The opening of the officers club the first part of May was a noteworthy occasion. Fortified by several gallons of green Manila whisky, brandy, rum, and miscellaneous mixtures of doubtful origin, the gallants of the 418th held sway in what was afterwards called the most royal celebration in the history of the Squadron. Ignoring (not quite successfully) the myriad flapping bugs



Officers club, with thatched roof. (Vaughn)

clustered about each light, the officers in no uncertain terms proclaimed the superiority of the night fighters to the rest of the Air Force and that of the 418th to the rest of the night fighters.

Capt. HENRY S. HOWE, O-572080, Radar Officer, in a glassy-eyed state, carefully scrutinized and questioned all the Squadron officers, until 2nd Lt. PROSPER F. RUFER, O-888930, and his cohorts, prevailed upon him to render the Harvard class song by the simple expedient of offering to fling him "bodaciously" into the nearest carabao wallow. How Henry sang! At the cessation of hostilities (or festivities), the club was christened the "Augur Inn" and newly elected chairman of the club, 2nd Lt. ROBERT D. HERZBERGER, O-871750, gave a short speech commemorating the occasion. All the members adjourned to the sack about 0430, leaving the Augur Inn in sole possession of a besotted Sea Bee reclining on the floor amidst the dead bugs, his head pillowed on a guitar. He was found the next morning; his position unchanged.

On 16 May, the 418th was relieved from attachment to the 85th Fighter Wing and assigned to V Fighter Command for administration and operations. The cause of this excited countless rumors among Squadron personnel.

First Lt. MERWIN E. LYALL, O-1574965, transferred to the 8th Fighter Group (Para. 7, Special Orders #128, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 8 May 1945) as did Capt. ROWLAND H. ROBERTSON, JR., O-482794 (Para. 2, Special Orders #147, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 27 May 1945). Lt. LYALL's ready smile and jovial temperament will be missed, as well as his able manipulation of the motor pool and ordnance department. Capt. ROBERTSON's sack will certainly miss him, though doubtless he will find another. A fine surgeon, his classic remark upon one occasion assured his immortality in the 418th. When told of a severe cold by a member of this command, Doc replied with astonishment, "Gosh! You better do something for it." Things will not be the same without Doc.



Capt. Albert H. Sorbo (P-right) and 2nd Lt. George N. Kerstetter (RO-left). From Fifth Air Force "Pacific Sweep" (Liberatore).

Transferred to the States this month was 1st Lt. PROSPER F. RUFER, O-888930 (Para. 1, Special Orders #136, Headquarters, FEAF, dated 16 May 1945). Lt. RUFER was a superlative RO, having flown with Capt. LEON O. "Toby" GUNN, O-885480, most of the time. "Black Rufe" was one of the better party hounds of the Squadron, and any binge was generally considered incomplete without him.

First Lt. JOHN YACKMAN, O-1641940, was also sent home "To learn Russian" (Para. 1, Ltr. FEXO 210.31, Subject: Orders, Headquarters, USAFFE, dated 9 May 1945). Lt. YACKMAN was a master poker hand as well as an able assistant to Capt. CHARLES E. LALANNE, JR., O-575276, in the Intelligence Section.

S/Sgt. DONALD LIPMAN, 12155475, was sent to AAF Instructor School (Flexible Gunnery), Laredo, Texas (Para. 16, Special Orders #127, Headquarters, FEAF, dated 7 May 1945). It is the general opinion of the 418th that Texas is more "overseas" than Mindoro.

Cpl. WARREN E. CLACKETT, 37613069, was returned to the U.S. from the hospital at Leyte for an ear infection. The Intelligence Section will miss his boundless enthusiasm and his unquotable quotes. We wish him luck.

Replacements for these men were, first of all, 1st Lt. JAMES H. HINCHCLIFFE, O-1640553 (Para. 9, Special Orders #52, Headquarters, 85th Fighter Wing, 7 May 1945). A graduate of MIT, Lt. HINCHCLIFFE has quickly become an exceedingly valuable member of this command by virtue of his accumulation of lewd photographs and stories, the revelation of which caused a stampede to his tent in the middle of a downpour. No one was killed. Lt. HINCHCLIFFE is Supply Officer. 1st Lt. RUDD J. COOPER, O-1553241, Ordnance Officer, also joined this organization-a damned nice guy (Para. 5, Special Orders #28, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 8 May 1945). 2nd Lt. CHARLES G. DENCE, O-731955 (Para. 4, Special Orders #147, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 27 May 1945) was added as Personal Equipment Officer. Two new flying crews, very welcome, came into the 418th on 28 May. They were pilots, 2nd Lt. JESSE H. STEVENSON, O-931865, and 2nd Lt. JOSEPH VASA, O-774366; RO's, 2nd Lt. LEO R. PARSANKO, O-876694, and 2nd Lt. RICHARD FOX, JR., O-931772; and gunners, Cpl. STANLEY PETROSKY, JR., 11141247, and Cpl. ROBERT J. WILSON, 13188296. They were immediately indoctrinated into the mysteries of volleyball and ground alert. Other recent additions were T/Sgt. ROGER A. BOISE, 16004863, crew chief (Para. 7, Special Orders #135, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 15 May 1945); S/Sgt. MURREL D. McCARTY, 18053134, airplane mechanic (Para. 10, Special Orders #130, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 10 May 1945); and Cpl. DAVID MARKOWITZ, 33600770, Camera Technician, whose death was described earlier in this Chapter.

General Orders #874, Headquarters, Far East Air Force, dated 23 May 1945, carried many more awards, all Air Medals, to swell the steadily increasing ranks of "Junior Birdmen" in this command. These were honored: S/Sgt. CHESTER P. CIEPLINSKI, 32388964; 2nd Lt. JOHN R. JONES, O-2007536; 2nd Lt. DONALD R. LASH, O-758012; 1st Lt. LINN W. LEDFORD, O-677789; F/O CLEWLEY W. STEVENS, T-192939; 2nd Lt. VINCENT WERTIN, O-2007557; and F/O THOMAS R. WRIGHT, T-180062.

Oak-Leaf Clusters came to the following: 1st Lt. WILLIAM F. ROSS, O-745943, and 1st Lt. BARNEY N. SKILLE, O-740291.

Air Medal and Cluster were awarded to 1st Lt. PAUL F. HARRINGTON, O-746100, thus completing a fruitful month.

## 18. Water Echelon Leaves Mindoro for Okinawa June 1945

The practice missions to ensure all and sundry of adequate flying pay for the month. On 12 June, however, seemingly to celebrate his recent promotion to Major (per Para. 22, Special

Orders #153, FEAF, 7 June 1945) and to prepare the 418th for future intrusion missions, Major WILLIAM B. SELLERS, O-407126, our Commanding Officer, took a day mission to the Cagayan Valley in northern Luzon. Upon reaching the target, Major SELLERS dropped his thousand-pound bomb in the vicinity of reported medium tanks. Results were unobserved. Major SELLERS then strafed enemy-held houses and other positions south of the target, setting two of them on fire. The primary purpose of the mission, aside from the tactical, was to determine the capabilities of the P-61 in regard to performance while carrying bombs and extra tanks. Results were satisfactory. The Widow seemed ready to crawl. Major SELLERS, shortly after this, made another run to Formosa, following B-24 snoopers over the target, which was Taihoku City, and then returning to base.

At this time, our new birds began to come in. Aside from two or three flown in from Biak, the aircraft were all at Saipan. Six crews flew from Mindoro to Saipan for the new aircraft. In ten



Maj. William B. (Bill) Sellers, (P-left), his RO, Horace E. (Hap) Holliday (right), and Crew Chief, S/Sgt. Hansen, with the "Ally R," a P-61A named after Bill's wife, Alice Ruth. (Sellers)

days all the B-29 crews in Saipan were relieved of superfluous cash, mainly by 1st Lt. JACK H. EGGINTON, O-770210, and 2nd Lt. RICHARD L. EBBERT, O-2027069, the Gruesome Twosome. The Superfort boys finally swore off poker forever. After this rest leave, the crews finally condescended to bring the planes back to Mindoro and resume the war.

No sooner had they arrived at home plate than the 418th was assigned to cover the initial landings on Borneo, the job being a little too big for the 419th and 550th Night Fighter Squadrons, as well as all the day fighters in that area, who were sweating out the weather. Staging from Sanga Sanga, the eight crews from our Squadron did a bang-up job, covering invasion convoys, bombardments, landings, and only returning to Mindoro after the Aussies were pushing well into the interior.

Other sorties were flown over China and Hong Kong by Major SELLERS, and Canton by 1st Lt. GEORGE H. WILLIAMS, O-763803. Lt. WILLIAMS and his Radar Observer, 2nd Lt. HOWARD C. DALBEY, O-870607, had a particularly rough break on this mission. Lt. DALBEY obtained two radar contacts on airborne targets, probably Nip, and had his spinner switches stick in the down position at

precisely that wrong moment. Contact was lost. Nobody's fault–just a tough break.

All this time the worthies of the water echelon under the able direction of 1st Lt. ROBERT A. WALTERS, O-570668, our Executive Officer, following orders to be ready for movement on 19 June, began tearing down the Squadron area. Lt. WALTERS ordered all usable lumber to be placed in a large symmetrical pile in the middle of the area, foreseeing the lumber shortage (rumor) on Okinawa. After all lumber had been The staging for the Borneo missions was out of Sanga Sanga, a tiny island at the extreme end of the Sulu Archipelago, a string of islands extending southwest from Mindanao, P.I. The Aussies began the recapture of Borneo at Balikipapan on 10 June. These were long missions, with drop tanks, typically more than six hours in duration.

painstakingly assembled, Lt. WATERS suddenly decided to hell with it anyway, it was too much to carry and the large symmetrical pile was accordingly burned. The assistant movement officer, 1st Lt. JAMES H. HINCHCLIFFE, O-1640553, our Supply Officer from the Signal Corps, tore himself away from his pornographic library long enough to report our LST was on the horizon. That was the 19th; on the 26th, we boarded the boat. During the interim, having no living quarters left, Squadron members lived in tents or whatever they could find. One group of eight homeless officers moved en masse to

Capt. HENRY S. HOWE's tent, ousted our Radar Officer, and spent the rest of the wait in the sack discussing sex. We were all glad to get aboard the LST where the main topic of discussion was sex. The food and quarters on the boat were pretty good, considering, and we had a swell stop at Subic Bay where everyone went swimming; so we did not envy the boys who went to Saipan too much.

The departure of the water echelon for Okinawa was only a few days after the Japs ceased organized resistance on Okinawa on 22 June.

Combat crews returned to the States this month were the following: 1st Lt. GILBERT P. EISSMAN, O-740147 (per Para. 1, Special Orders #152, FEAF, 1 June 1945) who had not been doing much flying for the past year (he is perhaps better known as a volleyball player); 1st Lt. BERTRAM C. TOMPKINS, O-754563, who downed three Nips (see previous Chapters) and was awarded the D.F.C. (per Para. 2, Special Orders #181, FEAF, 3 June1945); 1st. Lt. MARVIN H. DENNIS, O-750553, and 2nd Lt. WILLIAM R. RITCHEY, O-2007549, one of the best-liked crews the Squadron ever had (per Para. 1, Special Orders #164, FEAF, 13 June 1945); 2nd Lt. HOMER F. MOSELEY, JR., O-2007544, whose ill health did not prevent him from doing a swell job as Assistant Supply Officer as well as his regular flying duties (per Para. 4, Special Orders #177, FEAF, 21 June 1945); Capt. ALBERT R. SORBO, O-740296, one of the oldest members of the Squadron whose deeds are known throughout the Fifth Air Force and who is a holder of two D.F.C.'s (per Para. 4, Special Orders #172, FEAF, 21 June 1945); and 2nd Lt. HAROLD D. McBRIDE, O-2007543, our Recognition Officer (per Para. 22, Special Orders #180, FEAF, 29 June 1945).

Enlisted returnees were: Sgt. ELMER J. KOEHLER, 37315779, Armorer (per Para. 3, Special Orders #165, FEAF, 14 June 1945) and S/Sgt. EDMUND H. JAMES, 32614614, Armorer (per Para. 1, Special Orders #168, FEAF, 17 June 1945) who were over forty; Sgt. WILLIAM B. FLYNN, JR., 35484596, Airplane Mechanic, who was evacuated from the 165th Station hospital at APO 321; and M/Sgt. GEORGE G. BILLINGSLEY, 6955886, Flight Chief, and Sgt. PAUL REGGETTZ, JR., 6896895, Refueling Operator, who returned under the newly inaugurated point system (per Para. 8, Special Orders

#165, FEAF, 14 June 1945). To these men the point system was great; to everyone else, it stunk. We also shall miss the tall tales of Cpl. RICHARD C. ROSS, 6549150, Decontaminating Equipment Operator, who was transferred to the 852 Chemical Company (per Para. 3, Special Orders #157, V Fighter Command, 6 June 1945).

Our new Flight Surgeon arrived 2 June (per Para. 5, Special Orders #147, V Fighter Command, 27 May 1945); he is Major EARL V. WETZEL, JR., O-427222, and proved to be a very able Doc indeed, as well as a good volleyball player, which fact all were willing to admit when he "fat-lipped" 1st Lt. CARL R. TIDRICK, O-762555, and several others the first day. Two new crews also came in: 2nd Lt. HENRY L. GURLEY, O-774124, Pilot; his Radar Observer, 2nd Lt. CHESTER H. PORETTA, O-931766; and Gunner, Cpl. JACKSON BRADSHAW, 33885192 (per Para. 1, Special Orders #163, V Fighter Command, 12 June 1945), arrived at Mindora. Just making the boat before we left, were 2nd Lt. CURTIS R.GRIFFITTS, JR., O-774130, Pilot; his RO, 2nd Lt. MYRON G. BIGLER, O-931771; and Gunner, JAMES P. WILSON, 34990222 (per Para. 4, Special Orders #147, V Fighter Command, 23 June 1945).

Besides these crews, a number of Stateside "rookies" arrived as replacements for some of our battlescarred veterans with the Radar Section claiming most of them; Cpl. ELLIS J. LANZRATH, 17098991 (per Para. 10, Special Orders #153, V Fighter Command, 2 June 1945); Cpl. EDWIN M. JAKUSZ, 36293261 (per Para. 27, Special Orders #153, V Fighter Command, 2 June 1945); Cpl. JACK A. PIERCE, 42092330 (per Para. 11, Special Orders #166, V Fighter Command, 15 June 1945); Cpl. DAVID WIGHTMAN, 35061612 (per. Para. 7, Special Orders #164, V Fighter Command, 13 June 1945); and Cpl. RAYMOND A. TUCKER, 37497041 (USAFFE Reg. 50-25, dated 1 November 1944), all radar mechanics; T/Sgt. DANIEL J. WEIR, 33189209, Remote Control Turret Mechanic (per Para. 20, Special Orders #155, V Fighter Command, 4 June 1945); Pvt. WARREN C. STARK, 18106547, Automotive Mechanic (per Para.3, Special Orders #164, V Fighter Command, 13 June 1945); and Sgt. WALTER E. DUFF, 38095173, and Cpl. JOSEPH F. MULLEN, 39025300, Clerks (per Para. 62, Special Orders #93, 91 Replacement Battalion, AAF, 14 June 1945).

The General Orders from Far East Air Forces for this month were exceedingly generous in awards for our Squadron. Air Medals were awarded to S/Sgt. JAMES E. BROBERG, 33247921; F/O MILTON BURMAN, T-180281; 1st Lt. IRA M. BARNETT, O-746022; 2nd Lt. RAYMOND J. BURKE, O-999975; 2nd Lt. WARREN EASTWICK, O-1686357; 1st Lt. WILLIAM A. FOSTER, O-746074; Pvt. GORDON L.GLEY, 16071156; 2nd Lt. PROSPER F. RUFER, O-888929; and Capt. WILLIAM B. SELLERS, O-407126. Bronze Oak-Leaf Clusters came to the following: Capt. ALBERT R. SORBO, O-740296; 2nd Lt. VINCENT WERTIN, O-2007557; 1ST Lt. BERTRAM C. TOMPKINS, O-754563; F/O MILTON BURMAN, T-180281; 2nd Lt. GEORGE M. ELLINGS, O-770213; and 1st Lt. FRANK M. DUBASIK, O-888872. Second Bronze Oak-Leaf Clusters were awarded to 2nd Lt. VINCENT WERTIN, O-2007557; Capt MALCOLM L. RITCHIE, O-725795; 1st Lt. GEORGE N. KERSTETTER, O-888900; and Capt. ALBERT R. SORBO, O-740296. The following men merited Third Bronze Oak-Leaf clusters: 1st Lt. RAYMOND L. DUETHMAN, O-530246, and 1st Lt. WILLIAM F. ROSS, O-745943. The achievements of the following officers won them a Distinguished Flying Cross: 1st Lt. BERTRAM C. TOMPKINS, O-754563; 2nd Lt. VINCENT WERTIN, O-2007557; 1st Lt. GEORGE N. KERSTETTER, O-888900; 1st Lt. PHILIP B. PORTER, O-888876; 2nd Lt. HUGH L. GORDON, JR., O-551348; and 1st Lt. JAMES R. McQUEEN, JR., O-755987. Oak-Leaf Clusters were added to the Distinguished Flying Crosses of the following officers: Capt. ALBERT

R. SORBO, O-740296, and 1st Lt. PHILIP B. PORTER, O-888876, thus completing the awards and decorations for the month of June.

Radar bombing trials were completed by Lt. LOGAN and RO Lt. KAMAJIAN, using practice bombs with a tiny island near Mindoro as target. Direct and near direct hits were demonstrated over a range of altitudes. KAMAJIAN set his range line at each appropriate slant distance calculated from bomb tables, directed an "interception" and signaled for release when the target crossed the range line. Tables of slant ranges for a range of altitudes and air speeds were prepared and furnished to ROs at an orientation meeting. For inland targets, such as air fields not directly discernable by radar, a technique was set up using any recognizable coastal feature as an aiming point, followed by a travel time delay. The application of A.I. radar for bombing was put to use during the later intruder missions to Japan.

Original June 1945 Table of Radar Bombing Slant Ranges.

Example: If flying at an altitude of 3,000 ft at an IndicatedAir Speed of 255 mph (True Air Speed 270 mph), the slant range for bomb release would be 6,100 ft. If travel delay from an aiming point was required, the delay would be 13.3 seconds per mile.

				LANT RANGI		
Tru Alt	e Air Spe 200	ed 230	250	270	300	350
100	750	850	925	1000	1125	1300
200	1050	1200	1300	1425	1600	1850
500	1725 197	1950 225	2125 245	2275 265	2525 295	2950 345
1000	2525 195	2850 225	3050 245	3275 263	3600 292	4125 340
1300	2950 195	3300 223	3525 243	3775 262	4175 290	4775 340
1500	3200 195	3550 223	3825 242	4075 260	4475 290	5125 338
1700	3425 195	3850 223	4100 242	4400 260	4800 290	5500 338
2000	3800 192	4225 220	4525 240	4800 260	5250 288	6000 335
3000	4950 190	5450 21 <b>8</b>	5750 235	6100 255	6625 285	7525 330
4000	6050 187	6575 215	7000 235	7300 252	7875 280	8850 327
5000	7125 185	7650 212	8050 230	8475 248	9050 275	10100 320
7000	9200 178	9800 205	L0200 223	10650 240	11300 268	12450 312
9000	Range I.A.S		12275 2 <b>1</b> 5	12750 233	13450 260	고4700 302
ft/se ec/mi	le 18	337	366	396 13.3	1440 12	513 10.3
Ind	icated Ai		based on	20°C sur	face temp.	and norma e rate



#### 19. Borneo Missions Completed; Squadron Arrives on Okinawa; Night Intruder Missions to Japan July 1945

t the beginning of July, there were still a few patrols and convoy covers to be flown over Borneo. The battle of Balikipapan was covered with aplomb by a contingent from the 418th, after which patrols they returned to Mindoro. Also, several sorties were flown over Canton and Hong Kong, China, usually accompanying B-24 snoopers. These raids proved later to provide invaluable experience to the participants for our future night intrusion missions.

Meanwhile, the water echelon departed from Subic Bay, bound for Japanese waters. Finally, on 9 July, the 418th disembarked at Naha, Okinawa Shima, Ryukyu Rette, and proceeded to the Squadron area, twelve miles from the beach. The area assigned to us proved to be in the middle of one of the biggest battlefields of the war. Everywhere were helmets, canteens, rifles, gas masks, and Japs in various stages of decomposition. In the main, the place looked pretty sad, but after the Nips were discreetly buried and ceased to stink quite so much, the first temporary tents set up, and Spam a la Cervino (S/Sgt. WILLIAM CERVINO, 13152041, mess sergeant) and delicious creme de bully beef had been served in the spacious outdoor mess hall, things began to brighten up a little.

That night 2nd Lt. CECIL L. EASEY, O-2027170, as camp security officer, and his diligent guards turned the place into a shooting gallery. Every bush and shadow in the area were ruthlessly perforated with carbine and .45 caliber fire from the 418th and the Chemical Company in the next area. In the morning everyone expected to see the area littered with dead Japs, but there really weren't so many-none, in fact.

The next day, or evening rather, saw a pleasant breeze, forty miles per hour strong, uproot most of the tents in the area; however, the storm abated and order was again established.

At this time, three 418th enlisted men brought back one of the most unique souvenirs yet seen. While haphazardly searching for trinkets a mile or so away from the area, S/Sgt. CHARLES E. GRAY, 34128740, and Sgt. RICHARD C. HOOKER, 19099580, both radar mechanics, led by the indomitable treasure hound, Pfc. EUGENE F. GERAGHTY, 32807033, Medic, flushed a sleeping Jap. As the Nip was in a slit trench and did not awaken, the three were able to procure from a nearby Squadron arsenal, an arsenal of their own, including carbines, tommy guns, and knives, with which they returned, roused the surprised Jap, searched him and turned him over to the M.P.s.

On 26 July, newly promoted Capt. EARL R. BRADLEY, O-726622, new operations officer and strictly on the ball, announced that our planes had arrived at Kadena Air Strip, ten miles from the area, and that we would operate from that strip until hardstands were secured for !us on nearby Machinato Field.

On 28 July, we saw our first mission to Japan flown by Major WILLIAM B. SELLERS, O-407126, our Commanding Officer, and Capt. BRADLEY, their RO's, 1st Lt. HORACE E. HOLLIDAY, O-557901, and 2nd Lt. JAMES L. DICKEY, O-2027173, along with their gunners, Cpl. JACKSON BRADSHAW, 33885192, and Cpl. ROBERT J. WILSON, 13188296. The mission was uneventful, except that Major SELLERS strafed his secondary target with unobserved results. 1st Lts. JAMES R.

McQUEEN, JR., O-755967, and CARL R. TIDRICK, O-762555, were up later during the night, also strafing targets on Southern Kyushu. Lts. MORRIS W. GALLAWAY, O-767040, and PAUL D. FRIDLEY, O-770237, earned the sobriquet of Murder, Inc., when they shot up a town on Eastern Kyushu; however, FRIDLEY said that he made one pass to allow all women and children and infirm persons a chance to reach their foxholes. So perhaps the casualties were held down in the hundreds. 2nd Lt. JESSE H. STEVENSON, O-931865, did some exceptionally good strafing in the Kumamoto area, and Capt. ROBERT A. McMASTER, O-749570, bombed with good results to round out a full night's work.

Sudden missions to Miyakojima, southwest of Okinawa (about half way to Formosa), were ordered in the evening of 29 July to pin down Nip aircraft, reported by intelligence to be prepared for an attack on Okinawa. The first crew of several in sequence during the night was 1st Lt. STANLEY E. LOGAN and RO 2nd Lt. GEORGE K. KAMAJIAN. GEORGE hastily estimated the initial heading with chart and flashlight while riding in a bouncing jeep to the air strip, and plotted a refined course after getting airborne.

By the end of the month, all the crews had a chance to go over Japan, and all acquitted themselves in excellent fashion. Special mention must be made of the work of 1st Lts. SPENCER M. (one Pass) PORTER, O-770113, and EDWARD F. (Salvo) TRAVERSE, O-770478, for their work in the Ibusuki area.

On his first mission, 2nd Lt. JERRY D. LAUBLY, O-774204, had quite an experience. He had just been welcomed with open cockpits into the Squadron on 25 July, as were his RO, 2nd Lt. LEONARD S. FRUMER, O-931901, and gunner, Sgt. JOHN H. LORING, 18193363 (per Para. 10, Special Orders #201, V Fighter Command, 20 July). While returning to base after his first patrol, he received fire from the U.S. Navy. When LAUBLY finally evaded the flak and had time to reassure his RO, said RO was floating downward toward the blue Pacific. Four hours later, he was picked up and was back with us in a few days. He took the inevitable kidding with remarkable good nature, for he and everyone else knew that it was a natural thing to happen to one only out of the States two weeks. He has proved himself many times since.

That about wound up the month's flying and left us time to note the additions and subtractions in our Squadron personnel. We received word that our beloved, intelligent Intelligence Officer,



1st Lt. Stanley E. Logan in the "Black Panther," a P-61B. (Logan)

Capt. CHARLES E. LALANNE, JR., O-575236, was returning to the States on temporary duty. To take his place, Capt. LEASON B. ADAMS, O-915737, was attached to us (per Rad U 9830, V Fighter Command, 29 June 1945) and immediately began giving us the complete and unadulterated poop from the 308th Bomb Wing, under whom we operated at first, and later from the V Fighter Command.

Leaving the Squadron were S/Sgt. ROLAND M. DAWLEY, JR., 18002544, the envied possessor of 102 discharge points (per Para. 1, Special Orders #195, V Fighter Command, 14 July 1945) and Cpl. THOMAS J. STANLEY, 33329545, who was over forty (per Para. 38, Special Orders #188, Far East Air Forces, 7 July 1945), and Sgt. LLOYD A. DAVEY, 35530015, transferred to the 58th Fighter Group (per Para. 1, Special Orders #169, V Fighter Command, 18 June 1945). And so ended another month of the duration plus, let us hope, not too many more.

The hope expressed at the end of July became fulfilled. Only one-half-month more was needed. In August, the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945 and Nagasaki on 9 August 1945 led to the capitulation of Japan on 14 August 1945, quickly ending the war! Locations of Hiroshima (on the island of Honshu), and Nagasaki (on the island of Kyushu) are indicated on the map of The Okinawa operations area, with "burst symbols."

#### 20. Night Intruder Missions up to End of War!! August 1945

ugust really opened with a bang with bombing and strafing missions over Kyushu, hitting Tomitake, Tsuiki, Fukuoka, Kumamoto and Kanoya, as well as a few missions over China, striking Shanghai and the surrounding area. Besides missions over Kyushu and China, we protected our home base on Okinawa. It has been estimated that the presence of night fighters,

primarily, of course, the 418th Night Fighters, cut down enemy night attacks on Okinawa by fully two-thirds. This, in addition to the bombing and strafing done to various strategic positions, proved a brilliant feather in the cap of the Fifth Air Force.

On the night of 7 August, at 2230, 2nd Lt. CURTIS R. GRIFFITTS, JR., O-774130, and his RO, 2nd Lt. MYRON G. BIGLER, O-931771, caught a BETTY in the traffic pattern at Kumamoto and blasted it to hell. GRIFFITTS then became the last custodian of the cardboard "Medal of Honor" inscribed with the names of 418th men who have made kills.

On 5 August, the 418th lost a great team

This was truly a momentous month! We had been informed that as soon as the invasion of Japan started (the Kyushu, Japan invasion was scheduled for November 1945), every available aircraft of ours would be over Japan on missions "around the clock." On 6 August, the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima (on Honshu), and on 9 August, the second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki (on Kyushu), leading to the Japanese surrender! Our intruder missions were before, between, and after each of these atomic bomb drops.

when 2nd Lt. HENRY L. GURLEY, O-774134; 2nd Lt. CHESTER A. PORETTA, O-931776; and Cpl. ARTHUR G. BEAUDUAN, 11042016, were reported missing in action on a mission to Kanoya. There is nothing to do now but hope. As if this were not enough hard luck, the latest addition to the Squadron: 2nd Lt. RAYMOND A. COZZA, O-780867, and F/O ROBERT E. ODELL, T-180449, also were reported missing on their first mission to Kumamoto, Kyushu, Japan, on 10 August. They were actually in the Squadron only two days and a night. Fortunately, their aerial gunner, Sgt. FRANKLIN M. SHELDON, 42084801, who joined the Squadron with them (per Par 14, Special Orders #213, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 1 August 1945) did not go on that mission.

A check with the Total Army Personnel Command in 2000 reveals that the bodies of Lt. COZZA and F/O ODELL were recovered. Lt. COZZA is buried at the "Punchbowl," the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, in Honolulu, Hawaii. F/O ODELL is buried in the State of New York. Lts. GURLEY and PORETTA and Cpl. BEAUDUAN were not recovered.

The first exodus of enlisted men began on 26 August with Special Orders #52, taking all the high pointers who had 85 or more points. Hard working S/Sgt. HUGH JOE MILLER, 34506555, by popular request succeeded lst Sgt. JOHN C. MALONE, 16033961, who headed the returnees. The following

crewmen also returned to the States this month: lst Lt. HOWARD C. DALBEY, O-870807, 1st Lt. GEORGE WILLIAMS, 0-703803 (both per Para. 2, Special Orders 228, Headquarters, FEAF, dated 10 August, 1945); and 2nd Lt. CLEWLEY W. STEVENS, 0-2027070 (per Para. 3, Special Orders 227, Headquarters, FEAF, dated 15 August 1945). The Squadron also lost Sgt. MYRON D. SEVERSON, 17078009, airplane mechanic, and Cpl. RALPH E. PETERSON, 38438311, administrative specialist, who were transferred to the 68th Field Hospital, but gained Cpl. CHARLIE A. DUFF, 33214717, radar mechanic (per Para.8, Special Orders #132, Headquarters, 91st Replacement Bn., AAF, dated 31 July 1945).

On the night of 14 August, the 418th was torn away from "Two Girls and a Sailor" by a most unprecedented demonstration of fire from practically every gun on the island. At first everyone ran for cover, thinking the Nips were making final Kamikaze charges to all installations on Okinawa. Soon, however, rumors swept across the island that the Japs had sued for peace. Everyone became violently excited with every news report on the radio or with the liquor laid away for VJ Day. As each outfit heard a fresh rumor, there were new outbursts of hilarity and fireworks until there was a greater display of ackack in the sky than there had been for any Nip bomb raid. The celebration came to a sudden halt when

the Island Commander ordered a red alert as a safety precaution against wild shooting and falling flak. The guns ceased firing and the island blacked out on a night of restless and uncertain peace. During the next few days of negotiations, missions were scheduled and canceled with each new teletype from the V Fighter Command, until peace finally became a certainty.



At dusk on 14 August, 1st Lt. STANLEY E. LOGAN and RO 2nd Lt. GEORGE K. KAMAJIAN were in their P-61, loaded with two fragmentation cluster bombs, for their fourth mission to Kyushu, Japan, and the lead off mission to Japan for that night. They previously had chased a bogey back and forth, while descending into a valley on one mission near Kumamoto, until breaking off due to low fuel, and had the cockpit lit up twice as one of a dozen searchlights swept through their P-61 over Kanoya Airdrome on another mission. The target this night was to be an air field on the west side of Kagoshima Bay. Just as LOGAN was about to start the engines, ground crew rushed out from the operations tent and proclaimed: "The war is over; the mission is canceled!" This was the LAST "almost" combat mission of the Squadron in World War II.

This was also a photo month. Lt. KAMAJIAN, with his bargaining skill, traded P-61 rides to Seabees Public Relations cameramen to take group photos of air crews and each section of the Squadron. These group photos, taken on Okinawa in August 1945, are on the following five pages.



Lts. A.C. Nielson (P), S.E. Logan (P), J.H. Stevenson (P), Capts. R.A. McMaster (P), C.R. Tidrick (P), Majs. E.V. Wetzel (Flight Surgeon), W.B. Sellers (CO) (behind), Capts. M.F. Hall (Engineering Officer)(front), E.R. Bradley (P), Lts. E.F. Traverse (P), S.M. Porter (P), J.H. Egginton (P), J.D. Laubly (P), R.D. Fridley (P), G.M. Ellings (P), J.H. Hinchcliffe (Supply Officer), H.C. Vaughn (RO).



**Pilots.** Rear row (left to right):

Lts. P.D. Fridley, V. Wertin (RO), A.C. Nielson, Capt. H.N. Ingwersen, Lts. N.W. Gallaway, J.H. Egginton, E.F. Traverse, S.M. Porter, J. Vasa, J.D. Laubly.

Front row (left to right):

Capt. R.A. McMaster, Lt. S.E. Logan, Maj. W.B. Sellers (CO), Capt. C.R. Tidrick, Lt. G.M. Ellings, Capts. E.R. Bradley, J.R. McQueen, Lts. C.R. Griffitts, J.H. Stevenson.



Radar Observers. Rear row (left to right): Lts. M. Burman, C.E. Henry, E.A. Pietz, R.Fox, J.L. Dickey, M.I. Goldstein, R.D. Herzberger, R.L. Ebbert, H.C. Vaughn, H.L. Gordon. Front row (left to right): Lts. L.R. Parsanko, M.G. Bigler, L.S. Frumer, R.D. Campbell, V. Wertin, C.L. Easy, G.K. Kamajian, V.E. Holliday.



Armament Group



Ordnance Group





Communications Group



Radar Group



Orderly Room Group



Intelligence and Briefing Group



Personnel

Tech. Supply

Squadron Supply



Medical Group, with Dr. Wetzel

#### 21. On to Tokyo! September 1945

In September, the 418th flew part of the local night patrols formerly assigned to the Marines. Several search missions were flown with nil results, and there were three or four patrols over picket boats between Okinawa and Japan. Outside of some very enlightened conversations with the GCI operators, these flights were uneventful and caused no casualties.

While on post-war patrol north of Okinawa, the crew of 1st Lt. STANLEY E. LOGAN and 2nd Lt. GEORGE K. KAMAJIAN was vectored toward a bogey by GCI. As the interception progressed, GEORGE picked up the IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) signal from the unidentified aircraft on his SCR-720 radar screens at a range of 35 miles! The normal "contact" range for the AI radar was not over ten miles, so the GCI controller did not believe the announcement. But, the AI interception was then completed without further GCI input, closing on a U.S. Navy PBM.

In the Squadron daily life, however, a change was taking place. Uniforms appeared cleaner; there were more clean-shaven faces; the Squadron area was policed; and there followed a series of Saturday inspections, calisthenics and close order drill. The Squadron was divided into flights in preparation for impressing hell out of occupied Japan. After a few early morning P.T. sessions, everyone grudgingly admitted that well, yes, he did feel a little better, and the griping receded to a dull roar.



Allmost all of our remaining 418th NFS P-61s, in formation over Okinawa. (Logan)

P-61s of the 418th NFS over Okinawa, with diagonal tail stripes reflecting the setting sun. (Logan)

By now the Squadron personnel were changing so fast that it was almost impossible to keep up. The great exodus occurred on 23 September when SO #61 sent home seventeen enlisted men and five officers, among whom were Capt. RONALD H. (SPIKE) EHMKE, O-574495, our Adjutant, and Capt. ROBERT A. WALTERS, O-570668, our Executive Officer, who, between them, did more for the 418th than any of its other ground officers. Throughout the month, we also lost Major EARL V. WETZEL, JR., O-427222, our Flight Surgeon, probably the best Doc and the worst third baseman in the Pacific. He was transferred to the 348th Fighter Group (per Para. 6, SO #262, Hq., V Fighter Command, dated 21 September 1945); Capt. HENRY N. INGWERSEN, JR., O-750600 (per Para. 1, SO #242, Fifth Air Force, dated 30 August 1945); Capt. ROBERT A. McMASTER, O-749570 (per Para. 1, SO #260, Hq.,

FEAF, dated 17 September 1945); 1st Lt. HUGH L. GORDON, O-551348 (per Para. 9, SO #254, Hq., Fifth Air Force, dated 11 September 1945); 1st Lt. HORACE D. HOLLIDAY, O-557901 (per Para. 1,

SO #261, Hq., Fifth Air Force, dated 18 September 1945); 1st Lt. DONALD R. LASH, O-758012 (per Para. 1, SO #239, FEAF, dated 27 August 1945); 1st. Lt. VINCENT WERTIN, O-2007557 (per Para. 2, SO #242, Fifth Air Force, dated 30 August 1945); and Sgt. WELMER Z. SMITH, JR., 34409788 (per Para. 20, SO #257, Hq., FEAF, dated 14 September 1945). As all of those men have appeared



P-61s in formation over Okinawa shortly before move to Atsugi Airfield in Japan. (Logan)

elsewhere in the history, we shall now say no more than Bon Voyage and Good Luck. To compensate for our loss of enlisted personnel, forty-nine men from the 548th Night Fighter Squadron joined the 418th (per Para. 2, SO #265, Hq., V Fighter Command, dated 24 September 1945). As a replacement for Doc WETZEL, Capt. ERNEST E. LOWREY, O-1701246, became our Flight Surgeon (per Para. 7, SO #262, Headquarters, V Fighter Command, dated 21 September 1945). The Stateside replacements for this month were S/Sgt. LYMAN H. SMITH, 14050918, Operations Clerk; S/Sgt. WILLIAM L. SCHMEHL, 33232986, and Cpl. KENNETH I. BROOKS, 35610165, both radar mechanics (per Para. 51, SO #134, Hq., 91st Replacement Bn., dated 2 August 1945). Cpl. ROBERT A. BUSSE, 37633229, radar mechanic, also arrived in September (per Para. 12, SO #134, Hq., 91st Replacement Bn., dated 2 August 1945), with the latest Stateside scoops on the bobbysoxers.

On 26 September, the water echelon began packing and loading aboard USS LST #205 in preparation for the move to the goal of the war -- Tokyo, and the next day at 1830 the ship left Naha Ko for Japan. The air echelon meantime moved into four large squad tents, tore down the Squadron area and waited patiently to fly the birds to Japan as soon as the water echelon would complete its part of the occupation program. On to Tokyo!

The October account says the water echelon departed on 29 September 1945, two days later than indicated here.
## 22. Typhoon Hits Air Echelon on Okinawa and Water Echelon at Sea October 1945

Not long after the water echelon had departed near the end of September, the members of the air echelon began to regret the fact that they had been left behind. It rained constantly; living conditions were crowded; and the food was becoming progressively poorer. Then one day the wind began to blow. The tents leaned. Finally, one went down. Everyone was very sorry for the poor fellows out in the rain that way. The wind continued to blow. All the living quarters fell, with the exception of Major Sellers' shack; he is our CO. Practically all the Squadron personnel crowded into the Jamors' tent and attempted to hold it against the wind. 2nd Lt. PIETZ, our PX Officer, had his misgivings, however, and opened the door in order to seek shelter elsewhere. When last seen, said door was making fine progress toward Buckner Bay at 120 mph.

The Major's tent having blown down and everybody being homeless, the personnel of the 418th scattered to the four winds (one was enough, as it was). One group adjourned to the Japanese Tombs, and there spent a very uncomfortable night. Several officers, however, took refuge in airplanes on the line. Aside from the cold, the aircraft were fairly comfortable. Said officers, however, encountered a little difficulty in finding our own "Black Widows." The Widows had been shockingly dented by the wind and displayed a shiny silver exterior to all.

The next morning, singly and in groups of twos and threes, the men of the 418th returned to the area, and the area proper was all that was left. Finally, one ambitious fellow by the name of 2nd Lt. JOE VASA, our Squadron Communications Officer, began building himself a tin shack. Others followed suit, and by that afternoon, a veritable "Hoover City" had been erected. Most of the huts were leaky and overrun by rats, but after a few excellent movies procured by our Special Service Officer, 2nd Lt. LEONARD "Sugarlips" FRUMER, the morale of the men rose to within sight of bottom.

The account of "wind" is a bit understated. Actually, there were two typhoons at the time. The first typhoon damaged the control surfaces on several of the P-61s. About the time that repairs were completed, the second, more severe, typhoon struck, re-damaging the aircraft and causing a delay of at least two weeks for repair before the air echelon could finally make the move to Atsugi Airfield. It is the second typhoon that is alluded to in the beginning of this chapter. The coral sand sandblasted most of the paint from one side of the P-61s, leading to a reference in some post-war history book photos as being "worn aircraft." As the peak winds approached, the last reading on the weather section anemometer was 150 mph, before it was torn away. At least one steel quonset hut that the Navy had attached to a concrete slab (the Army Air Forces didn't have such luxury) was bent upward into an "L" shape. The "fairly comfortable" aircraft shelters belies the fact that some aircraft (none of the P-61s), tied down to 500-pound bombs slithered around like shuffleboard disks, and some were flipped over.

A week or so following this, the rest of the camp area was plowed, and we set determined sail in the repaired birds for Atsugi Airfield, Honshu, Japan. Arriving safely at Atsugi (on 24 October), the self-

styled "Old Boys" designated by the familiar Northrup orange caps were greeted by the most beautiful sight that could have met those combat weary eyes--seven new crews.

Atsugi Airfield is only about twenty miles southwest of Tokyo, and is less than ten miles west of Yokohama.

The seven new crews were sent over to the 418th as an experimental group. They were to run combat stability tests on the new P-38H as a night fighter. The crew consists of a pilot and an RO. These crews arrived on 18 October and were preceded by 1st Lt. GEORGE M. RICHARDS, O-1635353, SO #284, Fifth Air Force, dated 2 October 1945, Squadron Radar Officer. He was to set up the ground work and radar for the P-38 crews.

As stated in the September account, 226 enlisted men of our Squadron set sail from Naha harbor (Okinawa) for Japan on 29 September 1945. They traveled by LST, making the trip a long and tiresome one. Adding to their discomfort was the fact that they started to run into a typhoon after three days at sea and had to travel a hundred miles west of their original course. On 6 October 1945, at 1000 hours, they landed at Yokohama harbor in Japan. They had traveled 825 miles from Okinawa. From there they proceeded to Atsugi Air Base, where an advance air echelon had already set up headquarters.. They were assigned to two very large barracks that had no heating facilities installed. Officers were assigned to one barracks. So, at once, the men put up makeshift stoves and extended the stove pipes out through the windows. All this had a trend toward making poor draft and very poor visibility. Phew! What smoke! It wasn't long after arriving that they all moved into one barracks. The cause was the lowering of points and men leaving the Squadron for home. Their barracks now has everything in one building. It includes: Squadron Supply, Orderly Room, Squadron Message Center, Mess Hall, PX, Theater, Special Service, and living quarters.

The Squadron was in possession of six buildings in the field area. The enlisted men began going home in droves, until all the original 418th have been returned to the States. In the officers' barracks, provisions were quickly made for an Officers' Club, and work upon it was begun. 1st Lt. SPENCER M. PORTER, one of our flight leaders, was made Custodian of the Imperial Bath. That is our bathtub here in our barracks. Lt. PORTER surely acquitted himself royally.

The personnel in our Squadron is changing so fast, one hardly knows who is now in the 418th. On 12 October 1945, 22 enlisted men were transferred out of our Squadron on Para. 1, SO #63, 418th NFS, dated 11 October 1945. We lost 26 more enlisted men by transfer on 18 October, Para. 2, SO #11, AAB, Atsugi, Japan, dated 17 October 1945. Capt. LEASON B. ADAMS, O-915735, and Capt. EARL R. BRADLEY, O-572030, were sent home by Para. 8, SO #13 Hq., AAB, Atsugi, Honshu, Japan, dated 19 October 1945, including Capt. HENRY S. HOWE. These men were sent home on points. T/Sgt. WILLIAM J. BYRNE, 323958, was sent home because of his age (49), Para. 14, SO #262, Hq., FEAF, dated 19 September 1945.

The food here is excellent, and there is plenty of it. The cooks and waiters are Japanese, and they prepare excellent meals. The officers had two very good bakers, one of which is now in the enlisted men's mess, but then there isn't anyone kicking about the food.

There are many trips taken into Tokyo and the surrounding villages to see what can be procured in the way of souvenirs.

The enlisted men are leaving for home in droves and their personnel has been cut from 226 on the 29th of September down to 58 as of 20 October 1945. This has been the reason for everyone moving into one barracks. There are still 15 men awaiting an air offensive ribbon to acquire enough points to send them home. AND SO ENDS THE MONTH.

# 23. Settling in at Atsugi Air Base, Japan November 1945

he month of November was a busy one. The men of the Squadron spent all their spare time to their best advantage.

November saw a lot of changes in the operation of the group working as a Squadron. Living conditions were very much improved. Everything is more settled now. This tends toward a smooth running Squadron. The old and new members of the Squadron seem to be getting a little better acquainted, and working much better as a team.

The enlisted men have all moved into one barracks this month. The cause was the lowering of points and men leaving for home. Their barracks now has everything in one building. It includes: Squadron Supply, Orderly Room, Squadron Message Center, Mess Hall, PX, Theater, and Special Service.

The food here is excellent, and there is plenty of it. The cooks and waiters are Japanese and they prepare excellent meals. The officers had two very good bakers, one of which is now in the enlisted men's Mess, but then there isn't anyone kicking.

The enlisted personnel are leaving for home in droves, and their strength has been cut from 226 in

October down to 66 at present. There are still 15 men awaiting an air offensive ribbon, in order to acquire enough points to send them home.

Our former CO, Major WILLIAM B. SELLERS, was sent home, Para. 1, SO #2, Hq., AAB, Atsugi, Honshu, Japan, dated 5 November 1945. The command of the Squadron was then taken over by Capt. CARL R. TIDRICK, O-762555, GO #9, Prov. A.R. 600-20.

The 418th Tech Supply commenced operation on approximately 20 December 1945 at Atsugi Air Base. Shelves were installed as quickly as the lack of personnel and material would permit,

Tech Supply activities for December as well as November were entered here in the history. although in a week's time the Tech. Supply location and shop were ready to receive on its shelves the parts and equipment necessary

in keeping all aircraft in ready condition.

The first step was to unpack all Tech. Supply equipment and install it in the proper bins for immediate issue. Items were checked as closely as possible to determine whether any item had become damaged through shipment or typhoons.



Capt. Carl R. Tidrick, the new CO. ((M. Gordon)

All damaged items were properly tagged, and arrangements were made in the prescribed manner for having the parts serviced.

Project No. K 11482, which consisted of items for P-61, were received by Tech. Supply, and all 155 boxes were unpacked, inspected, and inventory of said project was taken. Items that had become damaged through shipment and weather were also tagged and taken care of in the prescribed manner. The project was completed by the middle of November.

In the meantime, the 547th Night Fighter Squadron was deactivated and their Tech. Supply was to be taken over by that of the 418th Night Fighter Squadron. Arrangements were made with the Tech. Supply Office of the 547th, and the 418th Tech. Supply commenced moving their equipment to our area for a final check and installation on our bins for immediate use. Inventory of the mentioned equipment was taken in event of any unforeseen error. Damaged parts were taken care of as already mentioned.

Day-to-day transactions were performed such as were required to keep all or nearly all aircraft in as ready condition as possible. These transactions consisted of receiving reparable parts and issuing the serviceable parts in exchange. Parts are tagged in accordance with their condition, such as serviceable, reparable, or condemned.



One afternoon, a two story Enlisted Men barracks at Atsugi Air Base burned to the ground, as shown here, in about twenty minutes. Fortunately, all occupants escaped unharmed. (Logan)

The armament section was just being organized at Atsugi with replacements from the 420th. They built an armament workshop in the Squadron hanger and started to clean the guns that had weathered the

typhoon at Okinawa. This was a slow process since the section only consisted of three enlisted men and an armament officer. One of the enlisted men was sent to the motor section to keep the vehicles running since there was no firing schedule. There was ample time to take care of the guns. The two enlisted men and officer in charge kept on the job and were to clean all the guns in nine aircraft, and preserve them with graphite grease. They then cleaned and repaired all bomb shackles and installations. Having unloaded the planes, they had a lot of ammunition



Thanksgiving dinner 1945 in the Officers mess. (Logan)

to store, so they took over a Jap ammunition dump. They were cleaning the stored ammunition when they decided to pickle three planes. They removed the guns from the planes to be pickled and hardcosmolined them and stored them on racks in the dump.

Squadron operations inaugurated a training program on 1 November, while under the jurisdiction of Fifth Fighter Command. The program was modified to conform to Bomber Command directives, 10 November 1945.

The loss of personnel made it necessary to place three aircraft in temporary storage around the end of the month. The use of the remaining six operational aircraft was restricted. This caused a cutback in the projected training schedules. The Squadron built up a total of 178 flying hours by Squadron aircraft; 159 hours were of training mission flying and 19 hours of miscellaneous administrative flying.

The Squadron is still awaiting the delivery of four P-38 Night Fighter-type aircraft from Manila.

The engineering section had 21 training flights and aircraft inspections. A tire blew out on the landing gear of #284 on a training flight. There was no one hurt nor was there any damage to the plane. The blowout was due to rocks and the poor condition of the runway, and not the fault of engineering.

On 21 November, there were eight new men to help in relieving the pressure on the four crew chiefs who were doing the work of 30 men.

Another tire was blown on #583 on 27 November; the strip should be closed for repairs before someone gets killed (opinion of Engineering Officer).

The motor pool has built two oil pits to take care of the vehicles. There have also been repairs made on a garage in which to repair vehicles. Things are running fairly smoothly at the motor pool, but there is a shortage of help. There were no accidents to any vehicles during the month.

The Personnel Equipment Office received a shipment of new Back Pack type parachutes. There were cupboards built to put the parachutes in, which we did not have before. The Personal Equipment Office took inventory and itemized missing material from the Okinawa storm. They made out a requisition to supply the full outfit. The records were straightened out and put in order.

Special Service has a group of fellows building an Officers Club and also an Enlisted Mens Club. They have requisitioned materials for the club and are doing a fine job. Everybody is well pleased. We have had movies here every night since they have acquired a projector. The Special Service Officer is also Mess Officer and has had a very good menu since he has been in charge. Everyone is well satisfied with the man in charge.

Our Medical Section lacks a Medical Officer.

The Radar Section has set up a new building and has a nice set-up. They are now repairing all radar sets. Those that have been in the Squadron were not in top working condition. The section has acquired five AN/APS-4 radar sets from the 547th Night Fighter Squadron, which has been deactivated. Radar had a shortage of men until this month and is now operating very well with the addition of five new men.

There wasn't much done in the sections of the Squadron this month because flying has been held to a minimum in order to repair the runways here at Atsugi. They have not been able to hold up under the heavy traffic.

In spite of runway repairs and personnel turnover, surveillance flights did get underway, continuing at least into January 1946. These were flights with an element of two P-61s flying more than one-hundred miles down the coast of Honshu, Japan, looking for any threatening ground action and allowing our forces to be observed by the populace to reinforce the United States victory.

## 24. The Year Ends December 1945

**PRSONNEL** - We find the month of December making various changes in the strength of the Squadron. There has been little change in the net number of officers assigned to the Squadron. The number of enlisted personnel is increasing and it is hoped that it will continue to do so. This will help ease the strain on the few men we have now. Though the increase of men has eased certain departments, we find that we will have to train some for other jobs. Most departments are still lacking men qualified in certain MOSs. Our gunners have been used at practically every job that they can handle. There is an effort being made to train men for the motor pool and ordnance, where they are badly needed. The motor pool has only one enlisted man and ordnance has none. There is a sorry lack of engine maintenance men and mechanics for the aircraft.

There has been an addition of 16 officers and 30 enlisted men this month to this Squadron. It has increased the total strength from 138 men on the 1st of December to 184 on the 31st of December (a total change of 46 men). There have also been 36 enlisted men promoted in rank this month.

December 1st added to the loss of one more officer, Lt. CHARLES G. DENCE, O-731955, sent home on points (per Para. 2, SO 42, AAB, Atsugi, Honshu, Japan, dated 3 December 1945). We also lost Lt. ROY A. SOMMERS, O-53821\_, 31 December 1945. He was sent home for



The "Black Panther," here flown by Lt. Spence Porter, on surveillance patrol near Atsugi Air Base. (Logan)

medical reasons (Para. 9, SO 233, HQ 42 General Hospital, APO 181).

**EQUIPMENT** - The Squadron has 10 aircraft assigned to it. There are nine P-61 Night Fighter type craft, of which three are pickled because there are no men to maintain them. There is also one B-25 type of aircraft assigned to the Squadron. There are to be four P-38M Night Fighter type aircraft added to the Squadron. These P-38s are still in Manila being assembled. The aircraft are all equipped with radar.

**OPERATION** - The occupational flights (training flights) here at Atsugi have been held to a minimum because of repairs that are being done on the strip. There have been several patrols started. These consist of two aircraft going aloft for a four-hour period, and the mission is to keep an eye open for any subversive activities. The total men on flying status are forty-nine.

**B-SUPPLY** - Supply has mostly been preparing men to be processed. All old reports were brought up to date. A complete check of personnel was done during the past month and the new men had to be processed into our system of keeping records. S/Sgt. BADGER was promoted to T/Sgt.

**C-TECH SUPPLY** - Tech supply has lost the one man who knew anything about that department. Before he left he was able to show the new man the ropes. The new man is doing a pretty good job of straightening up the supplies on hand. The property book is being brought up to date, and it is found that there will be a lot of equipment to be surveyed. There was an officer sent to Manila to try to pick up T/Os and stock number catalogs for the person who is expected to arrive in the near future.

**ORDNANCE** - Ordnance built racks for carbines and sub-machine guns and stored all gear in locked cabinets. All guns in excess of the personnel assigned to the Squadron were placed in permanent storage, and one weapon per person was covered with oil and kept ready for immediate use for security reasons.

**MOTOR POOL** - Motor pool had only one man assigned to the section for the month, so little could be accomplished. Parts were so hard to get for the vehicles that an officer was sent to Manila to attempt to get the parts. Reports were brought up to date and files were straightened up. We began preparations for all excess equipment to be turned in as overage.

**COMMUNICATIONS** - Since flying was limited, the communications section was not too busy. However, the shops were remodeled, painted, and additional shelves built. A frequency modulator was installed and put into operation during the last part of the month. The section received a number of new men, all of whom were untrained in specific jobs. Each of the new men is now being trained by the old personnel in the job of the section N.C.O., message center, and radio mechanics. A generator was installed to generate the frequency modulator set and other equipment which does not operate satisfactorily on the line voltage. Machinery and test set is being set up for the A.R.C. 3. Shortage of parts and T/Cs are representing many obstacles in accomplishing this.

**MESS** - The beginning of December found the officers mess running smoothly. Then it happened. The food began coming in cans and the bitching reached a gigantic scale. Nobody could be convinced that the mess personnel were not at fault for the fresh meal shortage. Christmas and New Years brought good meals and a temporary decline upon the ridiculing of the mess. One reason for the criticism of the meals could be laid to the fact that a good part of the Squadron has just arrived from the States. What the older men consider good food, the new men consider poor. The Japanese personnel are good cooks and waiters and are doing well with the limited supplies they have for preparing food. We need more onions, lard, etc. There is also a need for mops, brushes, steel wool, and sand soap. The mess hall and club are badly in need of heat. The storage and the baking rooms have been improved with ceiling and lined with aluminum. The mess Sgt. had gone home and was replaced by a new one who will be around for awhile. He has 18 points.

The enlisted mess opened with many changes taking place in the mess hall. There were new cooks who replaced the old ones who had gone back to the States and civilian life. There were many improvements incorporated into the mess hall. A partition was constructed to separate the store room from the rest of the kitchen. There were new tops put on the tables which give them a much nicer appearance. The food situation was the same as at the officers mess. The New Year found two new men to help out the tired mess sergeant who is sweating out his discharge.

On Christmas Eve, the mess hall personnel served a buffet lunch in connection with the opening of the EM Club. A good time was had by all.

**ARMAMENT** - Armament finished replacing all guns back in the aircraft and is keeping them in combat condition.

**RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES** - The recreational activity is high. There is plenty of athletic equipment in the Squadron and good use made of it by all. The cooler weather seems to have put a spark of pep in the men of the Squadron, and there are many football games being played by the officers of our two barracks. There are also many basketball games. Basketball seems to be a favorite among the men. There is a game almost every day. The Squadron has a baseball team which is now in the

preliminaries for the Olympics. There are movies every night and they are well attended. We are in need of a couple of projectors for ours are patched to the limit.

**EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES -** Most of the officers are putting in a little additional schooling that is put on by the I & E section here at the field. They enjoy this training very much. It is more or less a vocational training.

The Squadron history neglects to state awards of decorations since Chapter 18 for June 1945. Awards resulting from later missions during the last months of the war continued, but in the "scramble for the exit" following the end of the war, the accounts did not get into the history. There were cases of "By the way, here's your Air Medal," handed to one on the way out of the door en route to the ship.

## 25. 1946 Begins; P-38Ms Arrive; Back to Okinawa January - March 1946

he 1946 New Year rolled in with no major catastrophes. There was celebrating, but there were no reports of earthquakes caused by 418th parties.

The weather remains cold. It is not bitter cold, but just uncomfortable to those who are used to

the warmer climates down south of Japan. The Japanese military were the residents before us and their higher command did not furnish heat for the living quarters. Consequently, as previously reported, heating units had to be installed in the individual quarters. These are the famous potbellied stoves common in areas where heating must be furnished for the US Military Forces. They can use hard fuel (coal/wood) or with an adapter unit can burn liquid fuel (oil). In our case we have the liquid fuel burning units. Due to a not so scientific arrangement of the flues, plus the

The original history did not include coverage of the January through March 1946 period. This resulted from the extensive turnover in personnel going on at the time the Squadron converted from a wartime combat unit to the post-war mode. This missing portion of the history was reconstructed in the year 2000 by Robert H. Tyldesley and others who were with the Squadron while Bob was the C.O.

type of oil we have for our use, there is an occasional minor explosion caused by poor draft and combustion. This is normally in the middle of the night. The door of the stove is blown open and the particular room filled with soot. This unhappily covers everything in the room, including the occupants with a coating of the sticky black stuff. Efforts to improve the situation by adding gasoline to the diesel fuel have unhappily resulted in fires. The fires thrived on the wooden barracks and with the limited fire fighting equipment available, the buildings usually burned to the ground. Fortunately Spring is just around the corner, providing a chance to work on the problem before next Winter.

The Squadron looks more like a branch of the 22nd Replacement Depot rather then a hot Night Fighter Squadron. The doors of the Squadron are practically revolving with personnel coming and going constantly. Among the goers was Capt. CARL R. TIDRICK, O-762555, the Squadron Commander for the past few months. Among the arrivals was 1st Lt. ROBERT H. TYLDESLEY, O-745981, who assumed Command of the Squadron. Lt. TYLDESLEY and Sgt. PAUL GAGES, 35238489, closed out the 547th Night Fighter Squadron before reporting to the 418th. As reported for November 1945, some 547th personnel, equipment and supply items were gained by the 418th during the phase-out of the 547th.

Sgt. GAGES was assigned to the Motor Pool and made Motor Pool Sergeant under 1st Lt. RICHARD N. WOOD, O-2074558, who is now the OIC. Lt. WOOD replaced 1st Lt. MYRON G. BIGLER upon the latter's departure for the U.S. The vehicles were in bad shape. Lt. WOOD with Sgt. GAGES and several other personnel proceeded to Showa, Japan, to get some better equipment, including 6x6 trucks and weapons carriers. After much concerted effort by the short-handed Motor Pool staff, most of the equipment was placed in running condition.

As stated in "AIRVIEW," the Atsugi Army Air Base newsletter of 15 January 1946, all enlisted men with 50 points or 42 months' service or more have departed Atsugi AAB and should be on the high seas. This applies to those processed before 9 January. All officers who had processed were also gone. Among this group in January were 1st Lt. STANLEY E. LOGAN, O-770332, and his RO, 2nd Lt. GEORGE K. KAMAJIAN, O-2027167, who chose to return to the land of the big BX and abandon the plush living in Japan.

Another item reported was the arrival of the first shipment of cigarettes to be sold by the Atsugi PXs. A new beer issue was due in shortly. Also, there was plenty of coke for sale to all those who "bring drinking utensils with them."

The 418th combined the Officer and EM basketball teams to make a stronger threat to other teams in the Central Pacific League. Managers are F/O MEYERS and Lt. MOSES.



The new Commanding Officer, Lt. Robert H. Tyldesley. (Tyldesley)

The P-38Ms destined for the Squadron arrived during this period. The aircraft are modified L models. They are two-place

aircraft with the RO in the space just behind the pilot in a double-bubble arrangement. The RO office is a tight fit to say the least. That is not to say that the Pilot has spacious quarters. The Radar is an APS-4 with the scanner in a radome that looks like a 100-lb. bomb. The radome is mounted under the nose ahead of the nose gear. The P-38s became operational and have been flying some of the sorties flown by the 418th.

An incident occurred when 2nd Lt. GERALD BLISS and 2nd Lt. LEO R. PARSANKO, O-876694, departed on a local flight. Actually, Lt. DICK WOOD was the scheduled RO, but Lt. PARSANKO hunted him down and asked if he could take the flight because he needed the flight time before he departed for home. Dick was busy in the Motor Pool at the time and agreed to step aside for Leo. Getting back to the flight - there apparently was a bit of low-level work being done by GERRY. Unfortunately, at about a 100 feet more or less (probably less) while flying over a large bay South of Tokyo, the engines quit due to a fuel problem. They had sufficient speed to gain a little altitude and head directly toward shore. In ditching, the plane skipped along like a flat rock, finally settling in about 8 feet of water. Both men were okay. PARSANKO got out first and into the "oily" drink. BLISS stood up on the canopy rails/seats and got wet only to just above his knees. PARSANKO soon got back on board. (It was low tide.) Japanese boats arrived in minutes to help the crew get to shore. The Wingman F/O JOHN SHOUP waited until assured that the situation was under control and then returned to base to report the incident. The weather closed in and recovery had to wait for better conditions. The lucky twosome had three days of good living and then a Navy PBY picked them up. Some 418th Maintenance personnel were along to recover the secret Radar components on the P-38. After which, all returned to Atsugi.

We are occasionally blessed with a snowfall, which of course creates a temporary winter scene - a nice change. There was a surprise waiting after one storm. Anyone venturing down to the flight line found

an odd sight. Most of the Squadron aircraft were resting peacefully on their tail feathers. The snow was wet and consequently heavy as opposed to the powdery type. As the weather warmed up a bit and the snow melted, the aircraft resumed their normal three-point attitude. In case you are wondering why such a thing happened, it is simply because some aircraft primarily fighter types have a Center of Gravity such that normal loads will not cause weight and balance problems. Putting the heavy snow on the tail, however, caused an aft CG and hence the unusual event.

#### Move Back to Okinawa Ordered

The various sections of the Squadron continued making improvements and trying to cope with the personnel changes as noted before. To add to the general struggle for survival, orders dated around 7 March 1946, were received to move the 418th back to Okinawa. Fortune was not kind because we were still trying to get all the records straight and inventories conducted. In view of this, Lt. TYLDESLEY visited the Commander, 5th Bomber Command, and requested a temporary delay of the move so all the accounting could be completed. Apparently it would have been easier to ask that Niagara Falls be stopped for a while, as his request was denied.

It was time to press on and planning commenced. As is normal with a move of this type, there are several phases. An advanced contingent departed to coordinate with the new command, in this case the 301st Fighter Wing – 8th Air Force. The Executive Officer, 1st Lt. W. ROBERT GARRISON, was in charge of this group and the advanced site activity.

Later, several C-46 type aircraft were assigned to carry as much as they could in the next phase. The bulk of the supplies and equipment made the trip in the water echelon. The Army transports USS Anderson and USS Octarara were the ships chosen to carry the bulk of the heavier equipment and also some of the personnel to Okinawa.

The flyable aircraft made the trip to Yontan while the nonflyable machines stayed behind at Atsugi. A team with the parts needed to make them flyable will return later to prepare those "hangar" queens for flight. Several personnel remained at Atsugi to help with the final repairs. Once all is in order, the last of the P-61s and all personnel will make the final move to their new home on Okinawa.

Meantime, the P-38Ms were transferred to the 421st Night Fighter Squadron based at Itazuke, Kyushu, in Southern Japan. Later they were ferried to the Philippines and retired from the inventory. Some of the personnel went with the planes; among them was Lt. BLISS of ditching fame.

The overall move went reasonably well with some glitches and problems that always seem to be part of any move of this magnitude. The personnel of the Squadron took care of the glitches and solved the problems as they arose.

When Lt. TYLDESLEY and 2nd Lt. ROY G. BAKER were flying to Yontan, a minor emergency arose. Lt. BAKER shared the RO compartment with one of the Squadron pet dogs. About an hour out, Lt. BAKER made quite a bit of unintelligible noise over the intercom. Lt. TYLDESLEY finally deciphered his comments. It seems the dog decided to have a fit and was in the process of trying to bite a few pieces out of the BAKER hide. Diverting to Itazuke was chosen as a means of resolving the problem. From all the thumping and bumping going on in the rear of the airplane, it was obvious that the flight had to be terminated promptly. The dog was examined after landing and found to be seriously ill. Reluctantly, he was left with the Vet who said it would be best to put him to sleep. The trip then continued without further incident.

The major phases of the move now completed, it was time to put the 418th house in order and settle

down in our new home. The Squadron has been assigned a separate area not very far from the Yontan airstrip. The living area is basically a tent city. We have some buildings which have been designated as suitable homes for the Mess Halls and Supply. In addition, there is enough space for the Officer and EM Clubs. A Quonset hut will serve well as the Orderly Room. A large water tank formerly used by the Japanese is in the area, making it very convenient for the Squadron. Latrines and showers have been set up as well as a small PX. Gradually the Squadron is taking on a degree of permanence.

The 301st Fighter Wing Headquarters is located in what is referred to as the Bisha Gawa area. The 52nd Fighter Group with two Squadrons of P-47s and the 418th NFS are the combat units assigned.

The Wing Commander, Col. MARK E. BRADLEY, JR., welcomed the Squadron at a staff meeting attended by Lt. TYLDESLEY. Col. BRADLEY directed his staff to help the 418th get settled. At this time, a complete inventory was accomplished. It turned out that the inventory conducted in Japan had revealed \$5,000 worth of losses needing to be worked up into a Report of Survey. The final inventory now revealed an additional shortage of \$25,000 worth of accountable items. The paperwork was completed with appropriate justification and Lt. TYLDESLEY turned it in to the Wing A4. After reviewing the forms for proper completion, the A4 discussed it with the Wing Commander. Shortly after that, Lt. TYLDESLEY was summoned to Wing Headquarters for an interview with the "Boss." After responding to Col. BRADLEY'S questions, it was agreed that the paperwork would be submitted to higher headquarters. This was good news as the thought of paying \$30,000 for the shortages was not a pleasant one.

Unfortunately, a few weeks later the Wing A4 called the Squadron to direct Lt. TYLDESLEY to report to Col. BRADLEY. FEAF Headquarters had returned the Reports of Survey without being approved. On the way to Wing Headquarters, thoughts of Leavenworth or some other dire consequences were mulled over by Lt. TYLDESLEY. Col. BRADLEY explained that the basic problem was the beginning of stricter accountability by Higher Headquarters, including the introduction of new forms. The Wing Commander was an old Materiel Command hand and knew the system and what was happening in the Far East. He wasn't nearly as concerned as his 418th Commander.

The new forms were provided, which Lt. TYLDESLEY took back to the Squadron Supply Section and arranged to prepare the Reports of Survey on the new forms. This was accomplished. The project was completed again and the papers turned over to the Wing Staff once more. Review by the Wing Staff revealed no major discrepancies and the nerve-wracking wait began once again as the forms were being processed through channels. Happily, several weeks later, it was announced through Wing Headquarters that both Reports of Survey had been approved. All Squadron personnel involved with the project started breathing normally after receiving the good news. None more so then Lt. TYLDESLEY as visions of being required to reimburse the U.S. Government for such a large loss happily faded away.

In the meantime, the Squadron continues to get functional in the various sections:

The Orderly Room, monitored by 2nd Lt. JAMES A. NULL, JR., O-877473, is starting to get personnel records and other administrative items under control.

The flight line has been busy: Operations, supervised by 1st Lt. ARTHUR E. LEWIS, is getting adjusted to the new facilities. Flight schedules were developed and training needs evaluated.

Aircraft Maintenance, under 1st Lt. JOHN F. EDWARDS, O-780899, is beginning normal operations, as normal as possible anyway, in light of the shortage of personnel. The aircraft need some tender-

loving care. As mentioned previously, the "hangar" or more appropriately "ramp" queens at Atsugi, were later repaired with parts from Yontan. The last of them were then flown to Okinawa. The 418th became a memory to the folks at Atsugi and, of course, Japan at least a temporary memory to the 418th personnel.

Armament, under F/O JOHN J. HOOD, had some difficulty when a Red Cross officer was found living in the Quonset hut assigned to the Armament section. He was reluctant to move out. The unit the Red Cross man had been serving had departed; consequently, he had no valid claim to the hut. Some firm persuasion convinced him he should vacate the premises. Once the hut was empty, Armament was able to get organized for business.

The Motor Pool, under Lt. DICK WOOD, is continuing to breathe life into the Squadron vehicles. The work begun in Japan was just the beginning of a struggle to keep the rolling stock operating with limited resources.

The Photo Shop, under F/O HENRY BURROWS and Cpl. ROBERT A. HERROLD, JR., is getting into operation. For a while Cpl. HERROLD helped out in the Motor Pool because there was no facility available for the Photo Lab. Acquisition of a Quonset hut filled the gap and the Photo Lab is beginning to take shape.

The Mess Hall, under S/Sgt. STOBERT, is doing a great job. Working with limited supplies, he and the rest of his personnel turn out good meals. S/Sgt. STOBERT occasionally conducts a sortie to other units on the island. He takes items that are good for "barter" and returns with some meal ingredients we would not normally get through regular channels.

Supply has been busy clearing up the records and getting on a normal footing. As noted previously, a fair amount of time has been spent with the inventory and subsequent Reports of Survey. Now, more time can be devoted to normal supply actions.

The Squadron is allocated a number of the Japanese POWs on a daily basis. These individuals are divided up among the various sections and are used to help out where they can be utilized. An individual from the section getting POWs is issued a .45 caliber pistol and is responsible for supervising their actions. The POWs have been cooperative, doing good work, and have caused no problems to date.

The possibility of stray Japanese coming into our area necessitates setting up a guard schedule. Japanese are still being captured on the Island, so it is important that we maintain a degree of vigilance. Guards are scheduled for the night period only as the area is well populated during the day.

Everybody has challenges in their respective work places. Trying to be an efficient Section while conducting on-the-job training is a true test. Replacements are mainly in need of some OJT, if not extensive training, before being able to carry a share of the load. After hours, or at least when individuals are not on duty, some of the time is spent fixing up the living quarters (make that tents) and the rest of the Squadron area.

For recreation we have movies which are shown after dark in the open-air theatre. Also, games of baseball are played in the lot on the hill behind the Orderly Room. Other activities include taking exploratory trips around the island.

Each Section, by long hours and hard work, is helping to make a reputation for the Squadron as an outfit that Col. BRADLEY appears to like and appreciate. Those who have been around when he has emphasized a point with his "Swagger" stick, by a well-placed thump on a counter or other available spot, might not agree. But it can't be denied, he makes sure the Squadron is given all the support that

can be provided.

The end of March 1946 finds the Squadron operational. There are still things to be done, but the major shakedown actions have been completed. We are solidly in our new home.

# 26. After Relocating Back to Okinawa April - June 1946

### April 1946

418th Night Fighter Statistics Key Personel	
Commanding Officer	1st Lt. ROBERT H. TYLDESLEY
Adjutant	2nd Lt. JAMES A. NULL
Executive Officer	1st Lt. W. ROBERT GARRISON
Operations Officer	1st Lt. ARTHUR E. LEWIS
Engineering Officer	1st Lt. JOHN F. EDWARDS
Strength —end of April	
Officers	30 Officers
Enlisted Men	149 Men
Flying Status	28 Officers, 1 EM
Aircraft	
Number and Type Assigned	8 P-61s, 1 B-25

Description of the unit a little easier to meet, we find it quite the contrary. The largest percent of the new men are duty soldiers and they do not have the specific MOSs needed in a Night Fighter Squadron of this type. As of 1 April, there was a total of 27 officers, which was increased to 30 as of 30 April. The enlisted personnel totaled 92 men as of 1 April, there are still more EM due in the Squadron next month.

All rated personnel of the Squadron are still held on flying status. There are 28 rated officers and one rated enlisted man.

There has been one officer promoted during the month: F/O HARRY J. MEYER, T-180443, 0520 entered active duty as a 2nd Lt., AUS, effective 14 March 1946, per Para. 6, SO #83, Hq. PACUSA, APO 925.

There are now eight P-61s and one B-25 assigned to the Squadron, and four more P-61s to be picked up at Manila next month. All the P-61s are equipped with SCR 720 radar. These aircraft are used for night interception work. One P-61 was greatly damaged during April on a flight from Atsugi, Japan, to Okinawa. The flight was made in order to pick up three aircraft that were left in Japan when the 418th moved to Okinawa. The cause for the wreckage of the aircraft was failure of the nose wheel to lock in a down position upon landing. There was no one seriously hurt in the accident.

Flight operations of the Squadron are concentrated on training missions. The missions are accomplished by sending several aircraft aloft to work interception on each other. There have also been many missions which coordinate our work with GCI (Ground Radar) control. Friday finds the P-61s aloft on the regular Friday war games. Quite a bit of time has been spent in the training of new pilots coming into the Squadron. The new pilots are eager to be trained. The majority of them are twin-engine pilots which simplifies the training program a great deal.

Several problems have come up this month, one of which was the setting up of radar maintenance and communication schools on the flight line. These schools will teach the new men coming into these sections the basic principals of radar and communications. These new men do not have the correct MOS and must learn maintenance on the equipment they are to be maintaining. Each section head is trying to set up a school for their section.

Another problem which arose was the control of insects about the area. This was accomplished by filling in the pools of stagnant water with coral, and spraying the area with DDT. Good drainage has been and evidently will be a big problem in the area.

Tents had to be set up for the new men due in the Squadron. The mess hall sent two of its men to a cook and baker school in Manila. They are now back and starting to do some baking which is enjoyed very much by the members of the Squadron.

The recreational activity of the unit is very high. The day's work is usually topped off at night by a softball game between the officers and the enlisted men. We have five regular men on the 301st Wing baseball team. We also have a softball team in a Wing softball tournament. We have lost only one game so far. The Squadron also has a volleyball team which takes on all competition.

Squadron Special Service has set up an outside theater which is much nicer than our indoor theater. There is quite a bit more room and it is much cozier.

There has been a good softball diamond completed behind the Squadron area. This concludes the Squadron history for the month of April.

#### May 1946

**TRENGTH -** During the month of May, the Squadron had an influx of personnel. We lost two officers and 16 enlisted men, but we also gained 18 officers and 68 enlisted men, thereby increasing the officer strength from 30 to 46 and the number of enlisted men from 149 to 201. Two officers and three enlisted men (Capt. ISRAEL M. SHULMAN, O-1786185; 2nd Lt. HARRY J. MEYER, O-2030210; Cpl. RAY DAVIS, 38733482; Cpl. JAMES SMELLEY, 38710103; and Pvt. JAMES H. BONDS, 39748553) reluctantly bade farewell to their comrades and trudged sorrowfully away to repple-depples. Our gunners (Para. T, SO #103, Hq. 301st Fighter Wing, APO 239, dated 17 May 1946), moved down the road a piece to the 346th Bomb Group where they will cruise around in the big iron super-birds. Eight enlisted men were promoted and one officer saw his bar turn to silver before his curly locks did; namely, 1st Lt. JAMES A. NULL, O-877473, our Squadron Adjutant. Among the new officers are 11 pilots, six radar observers, and one medic.

**AIRCRAFT** - The Squadron now has one B-25J and eight P-61B-type aircraft assigned to it. The Black Widows have radar equipment which enables the night fighter team to intercept enemy aircraft under the most adverse visual conditions, a radar altimeter, a radar device for determining whether a

strange aircraft is a friend or a foe (IFF), and a radar tail warning set which warns the pilot when any other aircraft is flying behind him within lethal range.

First Lt. JOHN F. EDWARDS, O-780899, Cpl. PAUL W. LITJEN, 19184091, and Cpl. ROSS M. ELDRIDGE, 18196559 (Para. 1, SO #104, Hq., 301st Fighter Wing, APO 239, 16 May 1946) left on the 16th for Nichols Field, Manila, P.I., where they are completing arrangements for the transfer of four P-61-type aircraft which are to be flown up to our Squadron next month and which will give us our authorized quota of Black Widows.

**OPERATIONS -** An intensive training program has been set up and, with the increase in the number of flying personnel, is getting into full swing. The new radar observers are flying every other day and are being checked out in the operation of the radar equipment and the technique of night fighter interception. The new pilots in the Squadron have had much previous experience in twin engine planes, mostly P-38 and B-25-type aircraft, and consequently have found little difficulty in the transition to Black Widows.

The planes usually work in pairs and alternate in running interceptions on each other. Each Friday they participate in the scheduled war games during which they are controlled by Hazel Control, which is part of the Okinawa Air Control Center. By tracking both friendly and "enemy" aircraft on their radar scope, the controllers at Hazel are able to give our planes a heading to fly in order to intercept the "enemy." As our planes approach the point of interception, the P-61 radar observers pick up the "enemy" aircraft, and normal interceptions are made as the pilot is guided in for the kill.

**TRAINING PROGRESS** - Aside from the training mentioned in the paragraph above, a ground school for officers is being set up by the I&E officer, 2nd Lt. CLARENCE C. MURPHY, O-877989, and classes will begin during the first part of June. Subjects which will be covered are: Power Plants, Hydraulic Systems, Electrical Systems, Emergency Procedures, Bail-out and Ditching, Gunnery and Bombing, Night Fighter Tactics, Operations and Maintenance of Radar Equipment, Altitude Indoctrination, Navigation, Communication, and Weather. Instructors for these classes will be men from the various Squadron sections who are proficient in the subjects to be covered and who are not bashful when it comes to enlightening the unenlightened.

In every section, men are receiving on-the-job training and the system is working out very satisfactorily. When an on-the-job trainee is thought to be proficient by the head of the section in which he is training, he is then given the MOS which the job calls for.

Pvt. ALVIE B. SHIPMAN, 39761435, left on the 23rd for the Hawaiian Air Depot where he is attending a Parachute Rigger and Repairman School (Para. 12, SO #107, Hq., 301st Fighter Wing, APO 239).

**GENERAL** - Our PX closed on the 18th due to a change in our source of supply, but it is expected to reopen during the first week in June with a bigger and better stock.

The men are still making improvements on their quarters during their spare time, and many of them have evolved some unusual and commendable arrangements.

In closing, we wish to welcome again the new men in the Squadron and reaffirm our belief that they will prove themselves invaluable additions to the 418th.

### June 1946

I t's probably the same way all over the Army, about guys going home, I mean. Just look at what happened in this Squadron during June. Nine of our officers and four of our EM, after being lashed with a cat-o-nine-tails by a cat with (strangely enough) only two tails and horsewhipped by a horse who refused to divulge his identity (probably an AWOL from Crosby's stables), were thrown into chains and forcibly carried aboard a Stateside-bound vessel. For all we know, they may have even ended up in that Barbary Coast Bordillo called San Francisco. Serves them right, too. They've got a nerve resisting readjustment.

JOHN L. HUTCHISON, 1st Lt., 0722093, was transferred to the 413th Fighter Group. It's rumored that he wanted to fly a <u>safe</u> airplane. (No comment.) A new addition to the Squadron was JOSEPH L. GONCH, JR., 1st Lt., 0-0773614, a rotund cherub who predicts that the box kite is here to stay.

Twenty-nine EM were promoted the first of June. They're too numerous for a lazy lout to list here, so statistical-minded characters may peruse at their leisure S.O. No. 38 (copy no longer available). One particular promotion, however, is worthy of mention. (Since I'm writing this, I may as well get in a plug for an old soldier.) NORRIS L. PERKINS, JR., O-1061485, after only 32 months in grade, finally brown-nosed a silver bar. Needless to say, this blasted his chance of becoming the oldest living 2nd Lt., although his record for tenure of this rank does approach that of one CHARLES C. (Hotshot) CHARLES.

The war-weary and combat-fatigued cognomen "Eight Air Force" was readjusted and returned to the States, but without its personnel. They were transferred to the First Air Division which was activated 7 June 1946. This was merely a paper transaction. (Jeeves, get me the latest market quotation on red tape!)

On the 11th of June, 2nd Lts. ROBERT E. BENA, O-2094971; FRANK E. JURANEK, O-838666; and ELMER F. SANBORN, O-279775 (Pilots); 2nd Lts. LAWRENCE T. KOSTROSKI, O-2082609; RICHARD L. LILLARD, O-2092813; DARYL R. MOSES, O-2082503; and 1st Lt. JOHN RADZIETA, O-2043158 (R/Os); Sgt. ROBERT S. HOWLAND, 19205668, and Cpl. ALBERT E. MOSLEY, 4404860 (Sandbaggers), flew down to Nichols Field, P. I., in a C-47. For four days, they labored diligently to make final preparations for ferrying four P-61s back to the Squadron. On the fifth day, with the added company of 1st Lt. JOHN F. EDWARDS, O-780899; Sgt. PAUL W. ALTJON, 19187091; and Sgt. FOX W. ALDRIDGE, 18195559, they flew those same Black Widows back to the Squadron. On the night of the fifth day, they regaled their open-mouthed comrades with fantastic tales of how they had whiled away off-duty hours in the pursuit of native culture, some of which was pleasingly easy to overtake and take over. Speaking of--how's that, sir? Yes sir, that does bring us up to authorized strength on planes. We now have twelve P-61Bs and one B-25J which is used for transition and instrument work.

On the 20th of June, the 1st Air Division had a display of air strength. The 418th Night Fighter Squadron's contribution was a formation of seven P-61s which demonstrated how to wheel and deal in fine style. Speaking of tight formations--have you ever tried to concentrate on a comic book when your wing man had his aileron in your lap? Most disconcerting.

The ground school for officers got underway on the 24th of June with 2nd Lt. RICHARD N. WOOD, O-2074558, doing some fine expounding on navigation. The classes start at 1800 and last for a couple of hours. During its first week, the school was held in the orderly room, but from now on, it will be held

in a disorderly room in a Squadron tent on the line.

On the 29th of June, we were fouled by the fickle finger of fate--the mess hall building burned down, including the kitchen, the EM and officers mess, the EM and officer clubs, and the Squadron supply room. It started around 1630 and in half an hour everything had been leveled. The furniture and booths from both clubs were saved, along with strong boxes containing club money and IOUs.

One version of the origin of the blaze said that a fellow set it on fire to get out of going on K.P., and another version said that he did it because he liked his steak well done. It really started when some PWs were refilling a fuel tank and spilled some gas near a flame. The resulting blaze hit the fuel tank which exploded and sprayed flaming gasoline over the side of the building which was made of very dry wood, and it went up like tinder. By the time the fire trucks arrived, most of the damage had been done.

As soon as the blaze was discovered, our decontamination truck, which can spray water with pretty good pressure, was used to keep the fire from spreading. The water tank caught on fire, but the decontamination crew put it out before much damage was done. There were many displays of personal courage in fighting the fire, and everyone in the Squadron deserves praise.

Although the next day was Sunday, practically everybody pitched in with gusto and by noon, most of the debris had been cleared away. That afternoon a quonset hut was brought in on a flatbed and was lifted into place by cranes. If work continues at this pace, we expect to have a spic-and-span new mess hall in a couple of weeks, and this one will be much better than the old one.

# 27. Landing Incidents Survived and a Dodged Typhoon July - September 1946

#### July 1946

his month there were five enlisted men and ten officers who had the chance to go Stateside for a discharge.

Lt. WOOD must have gypsy blood in him. Anyway, he's turned out to be quite a globetrotter. The first part of the month, he went to Tokyo as navigator on a hop, and a couple of weeks later he took a similar hop to Shanghai. Just a gadabout with itchy feet, I guess.

On the 12th, the C.O. made Captain, and we had a big celebration. In the meantime, most of the officers have found time to help in rebuilding the club, which should be finished the first part of next month. The most eager beaver of them all was Lt. JASPER. Next month we should be able to behold his handiwork.

Night flying started the 15th, but right at first we were grounded almost a week by inclement weather. The planes flew off Kadena strip because as yet our strip, Yontan, doesn't have adequate lighting facilities. The planes were left at Kadena and serviced and maintained there. As soon as Yontan gets proper lighting, we'll start flying off our own strip. When the pilots have ten hours' night time, the R/Os will start flying with them at night.

The mess hall reopened on the 20th and, although the issue of rations is smaller than it was a month or so ago, complaints are few and far between. Then they come from guys who would grumble if they had steak and french fries and onions with pie and ice cream every night. They would complain because they didn't have it every meal with plenty of seconds. Some guys just aren't happy in the Army. What are they looking for--an even break?



Capt. Robert H. Tyldesley, CO, after promotion to Captain on Special Order No. 165, Hq. Pacific Air Command, dated 3 July 1946. (Tyldesley)

S/Sgt. STOBERT is our new mess sergeant and already he has put some very progressive ideas into effect in the mess hall. The fire that we had in June may well turn out to be more beneficial than

otherwise. Work on rebuilding the enlisted mens club is going along at a fine clip, and they will more than likely reopen before the officers club will.

On the 12th, Lt. EDWARDS returned to the Z.I. on emergency leave. He is not scheduled to return to this Squadron. Lt. CALLAHAN joined the Squadron on the same day. Lt. HALPENNY was transferred on the 14th.

### August 1946

aybe there are things worse than inflation. It seems likely, because last month another bunch of our men scaled a vessel which was reported bound for the States. There were four officers...2nd Lt. HOWARD F. SUDDUTH, JR., who hails from San Antone and who is going to Texas A & M; 2nd Lt. JOHN H. HEAD who said he was going to Nicaragua to dust crops (he could help fertilize them, too, with all the stuff he slings around); lst Lt. DONALD H. BRAN, one of the old Squadron boys who'll probably coach high school football; and 2nd Lt. RONALD G. MINOT, one of our few members of the intelligentsia who's going to M.I.T.

Among the thirteen enlisted men who took the voyage home were lst/Sgt. PAUL GAGE, JR.; the KAISER twins, Sgts. RAY and VINCE, who comprised a major portion of our contribution to the Ring baseball team; Sgt. ARNOLD L. McKEEVER, who helped to keep the orderly room disorderly; S/Sgt.WILLIAM W. DANLEGRON and Sgt. THURMAN R. HOLT, who were responsible (it doesn't have quite the same meaning as "to blame") for the chow for awhile. T/Sgt. JOHN H. COCKERHAM went home on an emergency furlough, and we sincerely hope that everything has worked out just the way he wanted it. Pfc. BENNIE (Ipana) IVERSON was transferred to Hawaii.

First Lt. WILLIAM MAIR, 1st Lt. JOSEPH L. GOACH and 2nd Lt. RAYMOND J. JUJCZUK transferred to the 822nd Engr. Avn. Btn., APO 105, on 31 July. Seems they're going to fly P-47s and spray DDT on the populace below. Just a bunch of buzzboys at heart. Wonder if they could use an observer?

At the first of the month, a training program was initiated to instruct the new student ROs in all phases of night fighter interception technique. Fortunately, most of the pilots are very patient with their passengers, who have been compared to a cross between a dial diddler and a tobacco auctioneer.

During the first week of the month our flight operations and its supporting units were transferred under the supervision of the Wing Service Division. Some of the boys took off on a mission while the operations shack was still at its old spot, but when they landed, the whole damn building was gone. A bit baffling at first. "One of our quonsets is a Happy Jack." Then they found out that the buildings had been hoisted onto flatbeds and moved up to their new location near the large hangers where people could lounge around.

First Lt. MAX R. BARKER has turned out to be a real "deal for a wheel" kid. On the 20th, he took off on a regular training flight with his RO, 2nd Lt. RICHARD N. WOOD. Just as the main gear of the plane broke contact with the ground, the left tire blew. Right after Max realized what had happened and when the tower called him, he told them that he'd stay up for the normal period and complete his mission. This sort of stuff isn't new to Max....he takes it in his stride. Last month over Kadena, both tires on the main gear sloughed off the wheels just as they hit the runway, but Max completed the roll on the rims and everything turned out all right.

This time the tower notified our operations officer, 1st Lt. JOSEPH B. BOYD, and our C.O., Capt. ROBERT H. TYLDESLEY, who went up in the tower. Max was advised to use most of his gas before

he landed. Lt. WOOD figured that Max could bring the ship in if anybody could, so he decided against seeing what it's like to pop a chute. They flew around for a couple of hours just burning up gas while the Squadron sweated them out below. Max came in for a wheels down landing and as soon as his main gear touched on the right side of the runway, he cut all his switches in order to reduce the fire hazard. The plane slowed down quickly, but in spite of full right brake and ruddor, it turned slowly to the left through an arc of about a hundred degrees. It finally rolled over a small embankment and came to a standstill about a hundred yards to the left of the runway. This last lurch put so much stress and strain on the plane that as soon as it was examined, it was turned in as class 26. Neither BARKER or WOOD was hurt and there was no fire at all. That's one way to go about getting extra parts which are very hard to get. Now we can keep 'em flying a little longer.

Lt. WOOD is really turning out to be the lad they're talking about when they sing, "Where is My Wandering Boy Tonight?" This month his sightseeing jaunts took in Tokyo, Shanghai, and Manila via Formosa. On that last trip they probably altered course to avoid a cloud and almost ended up over Bangkok! "Be a navigator and see the world!" What a deal.

On the 17th, we had a dry run for the big inspection scheduled for the 24th. In spite of wholesale rain dances and supplications to the elements to give us the works, the 24th dawned bright and clear and we formed on the baseball diamond. In spite of a few pessimistic predictions, the original consensus was that we "done good, considering." In fact, after the twanging and popping to and barking commands had ceased, the Colonel confided that he wasn't too displeased with the show, although a few rugged individualists had appeared nattily togged out in fatigue caps, their uncreased trousers sportily tucked into paratrooper boots. The Squadron area was in good shape. Of course, the fact that he mistook the cluttered, disheveled, jumbled assortment of stuff and things in the RAGSDALE-PERKINS Junkee Shoppee (You name it - we got it!) for living quarters was an inexcusable breach of good taste. If he'd just taken a good look, he would have been convinced that only a pack rat would live in a joint like that. Anyway — there's not enough room for anything else.

Work on the officers club progressed during the first three weeks of the month. Concrete was poured for the patio and a high picket fence was put up around it; palms were planted and lights were strung. A low stone fence was put up around the front yard which was filled with sand and has a palm tree planted on either side of the door. Lt. JASPER's ideas really panned out fine. All of this work deserved a climax and it came on the night of the 24th. The newly finished officers club opened with a resounding thud which was definitely not dull.

Quite a few of the officers went off the gold standard this month. JURANEK made the grade on the 20th and BARKER, EDDY, JASPER, LILLARD, SANBORN and SPENCE followed suit on the 27th. They didn't find out about this boost in prestige until Labor Day, so the event wasn't celebrated until then.

#### September 1946

The month started off quietly enough. Time mooched on for a couple of languorous days while the poker fiends gradually altered the financial status of the fervent fans to one of two possibilities--to have and have not.

The next day "Doc" ATLAS, our Squadron surgeon, left for Korea. He's assigned to a general hospital somewhere up there on the frozen, windswept plains--it's called Salt-Mine-on-the-Tundra or some such name. "Doc" probably left in self-defense, although you must admit he did have plenty of

opportunity to use us as guinea pigs in perfecting his hangover kit. He'll be sorely missed.

The next big event was the Squadron beach party on Sunday the eighth. Almost every man in the outfit turned out and in spite of intermittent and rather heavy dews, our spirits weren't too dampened for us to enjoy the brawl. There was plenty of beer and coke, and lots of food. We had fried chicken, potato salad, meat sandwiches, cheese and pickles. No one went hungry or thirsty. S/Sgt. STOBERT and the mess personnel did a bang-up job.

When the men weren't drooling over the vittles and dodging raindrops, they were either lying on the sand in the shelter of the rocks or else going in the water to keep from getting wet. We had a five-man raft in the water, and naturally a rousing battle took place to see who could keep off the raft. A little game developed which was called, "Let's see who can keep Lt. JASPER's head under water the longest." Four Fan CALLAHAN joined the fray, and the ground rules were altered to fit the situation. The game was now called, "You all git Lt. CALLAHAN and we'll git Lt. JASPER." I am happy to report that these two worthies are still among the living at this writing. But my personal advice is that they'd best wear a Mae West on our next outing which, incidentally, we're planning to have before very long.

On Tuesday the 10th, Lt. LANDRIGAN had a mishap which was practically identical with Lt. BARKER's accident of last month. As the main gear of LANDRIGAN's plane broke contact with the ground on takeoff, the left tire blew out. He decided to stay airborne for a couple of hours and use up as much gas as he could, thereby reducing the hazard of fire upon landing. As usual, all the wheels in the vicinity rolled up to the tower, and after a little discussion, it was decided to advise LANDRIGAN to make a power-on landing. As you may recall, in a similar situation last month, Lt. BARKER was advised to make a power-off landing. As a result, he was unable to control the plane completely, and it slowly ground-looped to the left through an arc of about 100 degrees. This time LANDRIGAN had better control of the plane because power was used on the landing. The plane rolled farther, of course, but it stayed on the runway all the time and didn't begin veering to the left till a few seconds before the roll stopped. Even so, the plane deviated only about 10 degrees from the original landing path. Since it was almost a normal landing, LANDRIGAN was unhurt. He even filled out the Form 1 with a steady hand.

However, one of his buddies who was sweating him out on the ground climbed up on top of the cab of a truck to get a good look at the landing. In the excitement, this character jumped down from the cab, but he kept his eyes on the plane instead of looking at the ground when he jumped. He hit the ground all right, but he twisted his ankle and fell flat on his bottom--a casualty, no less! Man, planes ain't safe, I tell you.

On the 11th, seventeen EM left for that never-never land--the U.S.A. Most of them were engineering personnel who will be missed on the line.

On the 14th came "The Big Parade"--a review for General TIMBERLAKE, who has now returned to the Z.I. As a token of appreciation for exceptional progress accomplished under adverse conditions, the commanding officer of each Squadron in the wing was presented with a commendation ribbon. This, of course, implied an appreciation of the efforts of every man in every Squadron. Amply compensated, we passed in review. Some of the men even tried to keep in step, as a grateful gesture.

That afternoon Lt. MOSES found out that he was now a <u>former</u> shavetail, and that he didn't have to polish Lt. LILLARD's boots anymore. On the l6th, Lt. BOYD and Lt. LEO were informed that they were no longer Junior Birdmen and that they were now privileged to wear railroad tracks.

On the 18th, a very unfortunate accident occurred in the Squadron. Pfc. BERNARD F. MAZUDA was unintentionally shot through the stomach with a forty-five by Pfc. JOHN P. POLTZER. It was purely an accident, but it was a result of carelessness on POLTZER's part. He was playing with the gun and didn't make certain that it wasn't loaded. MAZUDA is doing all right now, but he'll be in the hospital for quite some time yet. The two surgeons who worked on him at the 156th Station Hospital did a wonderful job.

On the 20th, Capt. BOYD test-hopped one of our P-61s which had just come back from a hundredhour inspection by PLM. When the nose gear touched the ground, it collapsed, but the main gear stayed down. As a result, the plane careened straight down the runway, skidding on its nose and rolling on the main gear. One spectator who saw the landing from about a mile away commented that it was "a funny way to land an airplane--such a tail-high attitude." BOYD did not apply the brakes for fear of flipping the plane over onto its back. It finally stopped rolling about three-quarters of the way down the runway, still on the landing strip. BOYD wasn't hurt at all, fortunately.

Crash trucks dashed to the scene, and the firemen started energetically and needlessly deluging the engines of the plane with streams of water. A bunch of MPs roared up, screeched to a halt, leaped out of their jeep and started checking everybody for crash passes. One overzealous lad lost his head and warned BOYD to leave because he didn't have a crash pass. BOYD looked at him disdainfully, with his hands on his hips and said, "Son, if I'd known I was gonna land like this, I'd have sure as hell got me a crash pass before I took off." The abashed minion of the GI Law blushed and wandered nervously in search of someone to <u>really</u> chew out.

On the 23rd, we received warning of an impending typhoon. The same big wind which wreaked havoc on Guam a few days earlier was now headed for Okinawa. The natives laughed at us for staking down the tents and said that there wasn't going to be a typhoon, but we made preparations anyway. Early on the morning of the 24th, five P-61s were evacuated to Shanghai to escape possible damage. Names were picked at random, and these are the men who went: Capt. BOYD and his R/O, Lt. NULL; Lt. BARKER and his R/O, Lt. WOOD (the wanderer of the wasteland); Lt. JURANEK and his R/O, Lt. LILLARD; Lt. BENA and his R/O, Lt. MOSES; Lt. SPENCE and Lt. RADZIETA. (The sixty-four dollar question, who is SPENCE's R/O?) Five crew chiefs went also: S/Sgt. ROW, Cpl. HENDERSON, Cpl. McDANIEL, Cpl. MILLER and Pfc. MILLS.

Well, the wind blew and the rain flew, but it turned out that the natives were right about the typhoon not coming. It did get pretty gusty, and it stayed overcast for about three days with dark, low clouds hanging overhead and some rain squalls. But the typhoon passed south of the island, which is just as well. From all reports I've heard, those big blows can be very devastating.

On the 29th, three of the P-61s returned from Shanghai. I guess the fellows ran out of money and <u>had</u> to come back. Of the two planes which stayed over there, one had a blown tire and the other had mag trouble. The men who stayed in Shanghai were Lt. SPENCE, Lt. RADZIETA, Lt. JURANEK, Lt. WOOD, S/Sgt. ROW and Pfc. MILLS. The fellows who came back from Shanghai had some fine stories to tell about how Stateside things are over there.

# 28. Personnel Changes, Thanksgiving, and Christmas October - December 1946

#### October 1946

s you may recall, the end of September left our Rover Boys still in Shanghai sweating out a fate worse than death--namely, having to come back to the rock of Okio-nock-nock. So, we'll take it from there. On the second, Capt. TYLDESLEY, Sgt. CAMMEL, Cpl. OLSON and Cpl. TURNER were flown to Shanghai in a B-17 by the 6th ERS. They carried along new tires, jacks, and new magnetos so that our two grounded planes could be made flyable again. Capt. TYLDESLEY and the boys layed over for a few days, waiting for the B-17 crew to spend all its money. They finally shelled out all their shekels and flew back to Yontan on the eighth, with lots more of those astounding stories about how rough it is in Shanghai.

The Squadron entered a super-deluxe, ultramodern, souped-up pushmobile in the Okinawa Soap Box Derby, which was held near the First Air Division. This dreamboat was painted dark blue and was aptly christened, "Blue Monday." It was made from a wing tank and had four rubber wheels, a pilot's steering wheel, a sporty windshield, brakes, and an instrument panel with a voltmeter, an ammeter, and an altitude limit switch. This last gauge was presumably to prevent it from taking to the air like a big bird. Trial runs were held on the fifth. Driver JIM NUNES pulled a "Barney Oatmeal" by flashing across the finish line with the best time of the day, aided and abetted materially, of course, by the energetic efforts of Sgt. COLLIER and Pfc. JOHNSON. Collier stumbled and fell by the wayside about two-thirds of the way down the stretch, but apparently his shoves had contributed enough momentum to be of considerable aid.



Capt. Tyldesley, CO, catching up on the news. (Tyldesley)

The main event came off the next day. "Blue Monday" zoomed in second to cop a prize of \$30. NUNES was again the man at the wheel, and the grunt and groaners were Sgt.ROBERTS and Sgt. McDANIEL. After the prizes were awarded and NUNES had spoken a few breathlessly awaited words to the radio audience, the participants were guests at the Terrace Club and sank their fangs into luscious hunks of steak with all the trimmings, topped off by <u>creamy</u> ice cream.

This month we hit a new high in the number of malaria cases in the Squadron. Since it was colder than

usual this month, some of the fellows apparently got careless about using preventative measures against being bitten by mosquitoes, believing that their activity would be diminished by the lower temperatures. However, their savage strafing attacks continued unabated. Consequently, more emphasis was placed on the proper use of mosquito netting, aerosol bombs, and mosquito repellent. Beginning on the twentysixth, no one was permitted to attend the Squadron theater without first displaying a bottle of mosquito repellent to guards who were stationed at the entrance.

Pfc. HAZUDA left for the Z.I. on the twenty-first. He's scheduled to enter a hospital to get a final medical checkup following his September gunshot wound and then be discharged. He's a very lucky lad, I'm sure, but there's bound to be an easier way to revert to civilian status.

Thirty-one EM left for the States this month. Engineering was the hardest hit, losing seven crew chiefs: Sgts. ALDRIDGE, HOWELL, KOETKE, LEAR, LITJEN, MONTGOMERY, and McDANIEL. Also taking the same pleasure trip were Pfc. NUNES, the death-defying speed merchant; Sgts. CHOPLICK and ELKE, a couple of fine bakers; Sgt. SANTINELLE, our Sergeant-Major; Sgt. HARROLD, the photo lab expert; Sgt. BAKE, the Steinmetz of the line; Sgt. KIMBALL, the motor pool magnate; and Sgt. GRADLE, the tech supply man who demonstrated his worth as a drum beater for I & E. All in all, a mighty fine bunch of men and we were sorry to lose them, although we can't begrudge them that long-awaited trip to the land of make believe.

On the twenty-second, Lt. RED WOOD, one of the Squadron's real old-timers, left for the States. The songfests at the club won't be the same without Red. That guy knows more unpublished songs than any strolling troubadour sauntering around loose today.

Lt. MAX BARKER left via air transport for the States on the twelfth. Max went home on an emergency leave and since he was a Category III man, he won't be coming back to the Squadron. We'll miss his congenial good nature, his cheerful outlook, and his even-tempered, sensible attitude. Max left a big vacancy to be filled, aside from the fact that he weighs fifteen stone, stripped. We sincerely hope that the reason for his sudden departure turned out to be not too serious after all and that by now, things are fine for "Pop" Barker.

#### November 1946

The first event of importance of this month was the entry into the outfit of three new enlisted men (of the RA variety), T/Sgt. LONG, Staff Sgt. WEAVER, and Pvt. ANGOSKI, on the fourth of the month. On the sixth, however, we lost six fine men to the land of make believe, Sgt. HOLDER, Pfc. GOFF, Pfc. MEADOWS, Sgt. JANCZYK, Sgt. KRANZ, and Cpl. MARTIN.

Sunday, the seventeenth, was the day of the big party. The Okinawan Village of Yontan gave a big going-away party to all interested Armed Forces personnel. Who was going away? The Okies were, being rudely ejected from their homes to go live elsewhere. Capt. TYLDESLEY was introduced to the Mayor and in turn presented all the boys, and then the fun began. It was a feast day for one and all of the village.

We were also happy to welcome Pvt. POLTZER back to the fold after his six weeks at the RYKOM stockade. POLTZER is ready to swear that he won't play with firearms anymore, and he's going to be darn careful as to the status of their load before he picks one up. He tells some weird tales of beer and riots up there at the stockade.

On the twentieth of the month, our three partners in crime-to-be take off for the big doings in Tokyo. Lt. NULL, Lt. PERKINS, and Lt. MILEWSKI are the names of the culprits.

On the twenty-first, news came out that Lt. BENA had been promoted to First Lieutenant, and Lt. RADZIETA would heretofore be addressed as Captain.

The twenty-eighth brought food, food, and more food. Thanksgiving in all its glory. To those who had not begun their party too early, the food was really something. Three kinds of pie, two kinds of cake, and one-and-a-half pounds of turkey per man, made a meal for all to enjoy.

Lt. DILLARD and Lt. RAGSDALE just joined the long list of men signing up for immediate release from active duty.

#### December 1946

n the second of the month, Lt. CONIFF, Lt. CROCKETT, and Lt. VALPEY were notified by telephone that they had been wearing the wrong colored bars since the twenty-sixth of November, so they were three happy lads. Twern't the silver on the shoulder, but just think of that extra silver flapping around in those long-empty jeans.

Those three wayward sons of the night, Lt. PERKINS, Lt. MILOWSKI, and Lt. NULL, returned to us on the fifth of this month. Three baggier-under-the-eyes people you never did see.

Today one of three new pilots who were introduced to you last month, Lt. CONIFF was checked out in the P-61. Quite a hot pick-up and a nice landing, too. Looks like another rock has joined the boys that make the noise. Hope so, anyway.

I didn't tell you about our little Hercules, did I? Seems that we had a friendly little wrestling match on Sunday the eighth (that fateful party day), and the going got a little rough. Pfc. ROMINO yelled "Uncle" to Pfc. ROWAN when he hurt his back slightly. One day later, when he decided to go to sick call for his back, it turned out that he had fractured his vertebra and had to be placed in a cast in the hospital. There must be some moral to this story.

The twenty-first was a big day for Capt. LEE. This was the day of the arrival of his wife and wee mite of a daughter--five months old. Several of the fellows went down to meet her with the Captain when she came in. Boy, what a sight to behold--all those wives coming down the gangplank to greet their husbands after not having seen them for about sixteen months. Ah, so. Perhaps I won't have to wait much longer myself.

Christmas even was quite a celebration. I think the prize of the whole Christmas was the very wonderful meal that we had. To give you an idea of how beautiful it was, the mess hall that the meal was in received a tie for first place in an island-wide Air Corps competition for the best Christmas mess hall. And the food that we had that day! There were four different kinds of pies, two kinds of cake, as much turkey, potatoes, dressing, and vegetables as you could eat. Here's where the real excesses came in. We all sat down at three o'clock, and no one got up before four o'clock, having eaten continuously for one hour. It looked like a bunch of little round men leaving the mess hall with their paunches preceding them. The officers were, however, a little disappointed in that our serving girls did not wear their native costumes that day like the girls in the EM mess did, but rather they came out in their baggy, old khakis and blouses. It didn't exactly add to the holiday spirit of things. This was a minor thing, though, compared to the wonderful things spread out on the table.

Ed. Note: The original text for July through December 1946 included some non-historical verbiage, which would be personally offensive to named personnel, their families, and the reader. The assigned "historian" for that post-war period, in those instances, exceeded his responsibility. The objectional material has been expunged to preserve the factual objectives of this Squadron history.

# 29. The Last Month Before Squadron Deactivation January 1947

ur year started out with, typically, the loss of one man, Corp. LEE BANNISTER, RA 37821182, to the 337th Air Service Group. This was shortly followed on the third by a group of promotions within the Squadron. Our new Staff Sergeants are: HOWARD CANTIEL and JAMES N. ROBERTS, with eight new Sergeants: JOSEPH B. AVILES, JR.; CHARLES M. CONKLE; WILLIAM E. GIFFORD; JACK R. HENDERSON; HARRY D. HOWARD; MARVIN H. OLSON; ROBERT W. PORTER; and GEORGE R. TURNER, JR. Two stripers are: JOSEPH LIGHT, GUSTAVO VALDEZ, and ROBERT D. WRIGHT. TRAVIS HUNTER has proof of being a first-class cook by moving up to the grade of Pfc.

The hospital has claimed two victims from among our ranks as of the fourth. They are Pfc. WILLIAM A. V. BIERS and CHARLES V. ROMINE. We trust that those men will be well cared for, and that they suffer from nothing more serious than the Green death. This was followed on the fifth by the long-awaited promotion of WILLIAM E. MILEWSKI from Second to First Lieutenant. Yes, a party followed.

On the seventh, Sgt. HARVEY VOGEL, JR., received an emergency leave to return to the States in order to repair some pressing personal business. We wish him all the luck in the world, and hope that he has time to enjoy himself in the States while he's there. Those losses were somewhat alleviated on the seventeenth by the addition of three men now on TDY at Loly Beach undergoing Basic Training: Privates KENNETH F. LOWRY, HAROLD W. BRADSHAW, and JAMES A. MOHR. On the eighteenth, ten more Privates and one Pfc. joined us under the same circumstances: GREGORY M. MOHAM, JOE PARKER, HERBERT E. SHIPPY, RICHARD H. MOULASHAN, IRL D. MCLAIN, KENNETH R. STIRES, JAMES E. WRITTLESEY, JAMES PUFNOCK, NORMAN V. WING, DON L. DARLING, and Pfc. NORMAN D. CAMPBELL.

On the twenty-first, GENERAL OLIVER discussed our proposed move into the Bisha Gawa area. His desire was that we should be in the new area and operational by the first of February. This move involves the finishing of the building, the wiring, putting in roads, and other work by the men of the Squadron. Every effort is being made to conform with the order for the move, but the great amount of rain has stopped almost all building, so that it appears that we will be weeks behind schedule.

The Radar and Communications Section on the line is undergoing a facelifting operation. All of their benches and equipment have been torn out by the men down there, and they are starting from scratch to build up the shack so that all of their equipment is located more satisfactorily and more logically. After they have their test and repair benches set up properly, they are going to set up a system of bin cards so that they will have an accurate knowledge of supplies on hand at all times. It looks like a marvelous improvement in that section.

On the same date, Cpl. BENNIE SPRADLIN was unfortunately confined to the RYKOM stockade following action by a Special Court Martial. We also lost four men before we even had a chance to see the kind of work that they do: Privates JOE PARKER, DON L. DURLENG, KENNETH F. LOWERY, and JAMES A. MOHR. We were repaired, though, by the addition of two officers, 2nd Lt. RAYMOND A. MOONEY, a Radar Observer and Electronics Officer, and 1st Lt. WALLACE H. PEDE, a Navigator and potential Radar Observer.

The twenty-seventh is just a list of losses to the Squadron. Pvt. JAMES E. WHITTELSEY was transferred over to the 337th, and a whole list of fellows finally made the trip to the Never-Never Land: Staff Sergeants HIRSCH and McNAMARA; Sergeants LUCKENBACH, KINDRED, DARMES, GIFFORD, MILLER, and TROUDT; Corporals GRIFFITH, MULLEN, LAMMONT, and TRUJILLO; and Pfc. GANZALES and PENA. A happy day for these men, and a sorrowful loss for the Squadron of a fine bunch of workers who left behind a great record.

The twenty-ninth saw the promotion of EDWARD V. LANDRIGAN from Second to First Lieutenant and was a welcome bit of news for all of us. On the same day, the nine men remaining out of the group at basic training (mentioned above) joined the Squadron and were assimilated. Two of these men were assigned to Communications, one to the motor pool, and the rest to work on the line as airplane mechanics.

The close of the month has still not seen us over at the Bisha Gawa area, but we trust that next month will see us there.

## 30. 418th Night Fighter Squadron is Deactivated and Becomes 4th All Weather Squadron February 1947

Starting with General Orders #7, dated 24 February 1947, Headquarter 1st Air Division, issued over signature of Major General HEGENBERGER, under the activation date of 20 February 1947, we see the birth of our Squadron at its very first groping steps which we hope will grow strong and steady as the Squadron moves on to its own tradition and glory.

The activation for us was a relatively simple process in that we are now actually changed over from the old 418th Night Fighter Squadron, which was inactivated by the above order, to the now 4th All Weather Squadron. We liked to be called the Night Fighters, but the new, more accurate name, still shows that we go out in the stuff that no one else wants to get into. Actually, we are very well settled down in the Bisha Gawa Area at the 301st Fighter Wing, and our activities continue uninterrupted. On the twenty-fifth of the month, seventy-five enlisted men joined the outfit--men that we have long needed. We will have to train most of these men as airplane mechanics, but we were also able to get a few of them for our sick, depleted orderly room.

On the twenty-eighth, five enlisted men and one officer left the organization for God's country. They were Sgt. CAMMEL, S/Sgt. ROBERTS, Cpl. PEKEMA, Cpl.VALEZ, Pvt. TEAGUE and Lt. MOSES. They were very fine men and our Squadron regrets their loss.

New work down at the Radar Section has been going along very well. They have almost completed all of their construction work on their bins and drawers, and they are getting to work making up their bin cards and a form of stock control records. When that is all completed, they should have one of the most efficient shops on the whole line— something that the new Squadron can well be proud of.

Thus ends the first month of what we hope will be a long list of months of Squadron histories for our new outfit. Capt. Robert H. Tyldesley assumed command of the new Squadron.



## Appendices

Summary for the 418th Night Fighter Squadron The Best, by R.T. Fisher Excerpts from Carroll Smith Classic Night Fighter Interception, by S.E. Logan Roster Aboard U.S.S. General John Pope Commendation Memos, H.Q. Fifth Air Force INSTRUMENT OF SURRENDER For Further Reading, and P-61 Black Widow restoration This page is intentionally blank.

Squadron
<b>Fighter</b>
h Night
the 418th
for
Summary

Inactivated: February 20, 1947 (became 4th All Weather Squadron)	<ul> <li>Wartime Commanding Officers:</li> <li>Apr. 1, 1943 - Jan. 15, 1945: Maj. Carroll C. Smith Jan. 15, 1945 - Nov. 5, 1945: Capt. William B. Sellers Postwar Commanding Officers:</li> <li>Nov. 5, 1945 - Jan. 1946: Capt. Carl R. Tidrick Jan. 1946 - Jan. 20, 1947: Capt. Robert H. Tyldesley</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Operational Stations:</li> <li>Nov. 2, 1943: Milne Bay, New Guinea</li> <li>Nov. 22, 1943: Dobodura, New Guinea</li> <li>Nov. 22, 1944: Finschhafen, New Guinea</li> <li>Mar. 28, 1944: Finschhafen, New Guinea</li> <li>May 12, 1944: Hollandia, New Guinea</li> <li>Jun. 8 - Aug. 18, 1944: Insoemoar (Wakde) Island, Wakde Islands Detachment</li> <li>Sept. 16 - Oct. 5, 1944: Owi Island, Padaido Island, Detachment</li> <li>Sept. 28, 1944: Morotai, Halmaheras</li> <li>Nov 123, 1944: Morotai, Halmaheras</li> <li>Nov 123, 1944: Duri Eve. Parke Ph Detachment (Ground echelon only)</li> </ul>
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Nov. 14-30, 1944: Dulag, Leyte, PI Detachment (Ground echelon only)
Dec. 15-26, 1944: San Jose, Mindoro, PI Detachment (Ground echelon only)
Dec. 26, 1944: San Jose, Mindoro, PI
Jun. - July 1945: Sanga Sanga Island, Sulu Archipelago, Detachment
Jul. - Oct. 1945: Okinawa, Ryukyus
Oct. 1945 - Mar. 1946: Atsugi, Japan
Mar. 1946 - Feb. 1947: Okinawa, Ryukyus

Operational Aircraft: 1943-1944: P-70 & P-70A 1943-1944: P-38F, G & J Jun. - Aug. 1944: B-25H 1944-1945: P-61A & B

P-70: 0/0/0 P-38: 2/2/0 P-61: 18/1/0 Squadron Total: 20/3/0 Enemy Aircraft Destroyed:

Confirmed Aircraft Victories:

April 1, 1943

Activated:

Maj. Carroll C. Smith(P)	P-38	Jan. 13, 44	Val
Maj. Carroll C. Smith(P)	P-61	Oct. 7, 44	Dinah
1st Lt. William F. Ross(P)	P-61	Nov. 6. 44	Betty
2nd Lt. Raymond L. Duethman(R/O)	V0)		622
1st Lt. Harold B. Whittern(P)	P-61	Nov. 13, 44	TE Bomber
2nd Lt. Bunyan A. Crain, Jr.(R/O)	<u> </u>		
Maj. Carroll C. Smith(P)	P-38	Nov. 28, 44	Betty
2nd Lt. Bertram C. Tompkins(P)	P-61	Dec. 9, 44	Floatplane
F/O Vincent Wertin(R/O)	;		
1st Lt. Malcolm L. Kitchie(P) F/O Vincent Wertin(R/O	P-61	Dec. 27, 44	Tony
2nd Lt. Bertram C. Tompkins(P)	P-61	Dec. 28, 44	Tony
F/U Vincent Wertin(K/U)			
2nd Lt. Bertram C. Tompkins(P) F/O Vincent Wertin(R/O)	P-61	Dec. 28, 44	Tony
Maj. Carroll C. Smith(P)	P-61	Dec. 29, 44	Irving
1st Lt. Philip B. Porter(K/U)			
Maj. Carroll C. Smith(P)	P-61	Dec. 29, 44	Irving
1st Lt. Philip B. Porter(R/O)			
2nd Lt. George M. Ellings(P)	P-61	Dec. 30, 44	Rufe
F/O Milton Burman(R/O)			
Maj. Carroll C. Smith(P)	P-61	Dec. 30, 44	Rufe
1st Lt. Philip B. Porter(R/O)			
Maj. Carroll C. Smith(P)	P-61	Dec. 30, 44	Frank
1st Lt. Philip B. Porter(R/O)			
1st Lt. Albert R. Sorbo(P)	P-61	Jan. 4, 45	Jake
2nd Lt. George N. Kerstetter(R/O)			
lst Lt. Albert R. Sorbo(P)	P-61	Jan. 4, 45	Jake
2nd Lt. George N. Kerstetter(R/O)			
1st Lt. Albert R. Sorbo(P)	P-61	Jan. 5, 45	Val
2nd Lt. George N. Kerstetter(R/O)			
2nd Lt. James R. McQueen, Jr.(P)	P-61	Jan. 18, 45	TE bomber
znd LJ. James K. McQueen, Jr.(P) 2nd Lf. Hugh L. Gordon(R/O)	P-61	Jan. 18, 45	TE bomber
2nd Lt. Curtis R. Griffitts, Jr.(P)	P-61	Aug. 7, 45	Betty
2nd Lt. Myron G. Bigler(R/O)			

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## The Best

#### by Roland Fisher

During 1999, I read books by two authors. Both affected me deeply. Tom Brokaw wrote "The Greatest Generation," about a generation of American men and women who, born in the echos of the First World War, reached adolescence during the



bleak, desperate years of the Great Depression and came of age during the excitement and danger of World War II. This generation was shaped at a time of economic despair, in days when they watched their parents lose their jobs, their homes; when the future was so uncertain, it seemed to play out just one day at a time.

Then, as they approached adulthood, the world exploded in war, and they abruptly were summoned to protect personal freedoms that were being destroyed everywhere outside of America.

Their response was magnificent. They came from all parts and all walks of the nation. Regardless of their origin, they united with a common purpose and with common values—duty, honor and love of country. At a time when their lives should have involved gentle romance, they had thrust upon them the responsibility of saving the world from tyranny, and they did.

Brokaw calls them the greatest generation any society has ever produced. It WAS the greatest generation ever. It was OUR generation.

The other author was Studs Terkel who wrote "The Good War," a history of World War II. "Good" and "War" are incongruent. They seem contradictory. But World War II WAS a good war. It was a different kind of war. We, who lived through it, understand what that means. It was not expansion of our territory. We sought not to build an empire or impose our culture on another. Our enemies did. In fact, they had overrun vast areas and began mercilessly eliminating entire populations when we entered the war. They made it clear they were intent on destroying the personal freedoms that we held were precious rights, worth dying to preserve. If any war can be called just, it was the Second World War.

And—it was OUR war. It was OUR generation that answered the call to save the world from the two most powerful and ruthless military machines ever assembled.

For four years, the young men of the World War II Night Fighters fought vicious enemies, in dark skies where danger filled every corner, some living in despicable conditions in primitive places with names the world had never heard of. Scores of us died, some in unknown places, lost forever in deep waters or dense forests or a trackless desert. Some died from enemy fire; some from crashes flying in impossible weather.

For four years, we flew through the dark fog of England, the sandstorms of North Africa, over the mud of Italy, the frozen fields of France and Germany, the dense jungles of the South Pacific, the towering mountains in China. The very nature of our duty carried out in darkness and savage weather bore the highest risk of death of all the airmen in the war. But most of us survived, even thrived in those dangerous, faraway parts of the world.

We thrived because we were the best. Close to a half-million pilots and like numbers of other aircrew completed training during the war. A tiny fraction of those, only 435 crews, the very best, were selected to be trained as night fighters. This elite group began with 35 pilots who, before America entered the
war, as barely more than teenagers, had volunteered and flown night combat with the Royal Air Force against the mighty Luftwaffe.

World War II had raged for two years before the jolt of Pearl Harbor thrust all of America against the greatest threat to the freedom of man in history. We had a ragged start, but we gained momentum and we prevailed. We beat back the fanatic enemy. We sank their warships. We knocked their planes from the sky. We smashed their factories. We crushed their mighty military machines. We made them, unconditionally, surrender.

We won OUR war, and went home.

Well—that war began nearly sixty years ago. Time is working against us. The swift, black fighters in which we prowled through the sky, seeking out the foe, are now a pitifully few airplanes, muted and motionless, setting in the back corners of museums. WE are decreasing in numbers. Brokaw reports that many thousands of World War II veterans die every month. Those of the Night Fighters are proportionately affected. We were young men when we came home from the war. Now we are in our twilight. Since the war, our numbers have fallen, scores of us gone.

Sadly, among too many of those who came after us, there is a disturbing disregard of World War II and a near complete forgetting of the Great Depression, although both were events that forever changed the psyche and the face of the United States, of the entire world.

Not so here—I don't forget. Sometimes I pull forth from a corner of my closet, a battered, single-shot, .410 gauge shotgun. I think back to the bitter winter of 1933 when my father—my very young father—worked at menial labor for one of the few well-off people in the community, just for that gun. At age 12, I had yearned for my own gun to hunt on the fringes of Denver. Dad had seen the .410 in the garage of the owner. The price was one dollar. Dad did not have it. He made a deal to work all day for it. The owner paid him with it and gave him an extra dollar. To me, that gun has immeasurable value. Its intrinsic worth? In this day of \$3000 Brownings, it is, maybe, fifty dollars. I don't scoff at that. I hold it in my hand, and I see the light in my father's face when he gave it to me for my birthday. I remember.

As I look at my hand, pictures scroll through my memory and I see other hands. It is ten years later— February, 1943. I am in a room in London, England, with a handful of other Americans who have just traded their RAF, cloth shoulder stripes for the metal bars of an AAF lieutenant. Our salutes are returned by the hand of Colonel Winston Kratz who tells us we soon will be in the U.S. to help build a night fighter arm in the Army Air Force.

The memories scroll on—it is May, in Florida, and I shake the hand of Captain Carroll Smith, just made CO of the newly formed 418th Night Fighter Squadron. I have just met the future, top night fighter ace of the war. It is October. My good friend, Toby Gunn, and I grasp hands and wish each other luck as we board the USS General John Pope, jammed in with 6000 other bodies, to take night fighting to the South Pacific.

It is November. We are dropped onto a raw, primitive island of towering mountains and primeval rain forest and engage in a war in places with names the folks back home will hear for the first time: Dobodura, Buna, Nadzab, Wakde, Owi. The war brings us our first losses. I help pull the bodies of Harry Crum and his two crewmen, Sgts. Bill Weinfurther and Roy Bishop, from the wreckage of their P-70 in the bay off Buna. Shortly after, Bill Carriger crashed while strafing an enemy ack-ack emplacement. Ed Craig failed to return from a mission. Then Forrestal—and Holley—and Ferris. In its two years of war, the 418th lost twenty-eight brave young men. Many of these men were lost after I was

no longer with the Squadron.

1943 ends. 1944 takes us on a wild, nighttime tour through New Guinea and other enemy bases on islands to the west and north. We lose more men to the war.

It is July at Nadzab. A famous American, Charles Lindbergh, is there teaching better fuel economy to Fifth Air Force fighter pilots. A handsome, young, Northrop test pilot, John Myers, flies in, piloting a shiny black beauty called a P-61. He gives Lindbergh a quick cockpit check and the two civilians take off with Lindbergh at the controls and head for some high mountains. They return later that day with a big load of fresh vegetables.\*

The war rages on. It is October. I am amidst the noise and chaos of the battle for the Tacloban airstrip on Leyte, our single toehold in our return to the Philippines. The single, metal-mat strip along the beach is jammed on both sides with Marine Corsairs and AAF fighters and bombers. We are under constant air attack. It is a dark night. A fanatic, enemy pilot crash lands a transport full of suicide paratroopers along the side of the strip, destroys a dozen planes parked on the beach, takes many American lives, hits a bulldozer and explodes in a ball of flame just short of a parked P-61. I help pull one of our men from the flaming wreckage. We lay him on a stretcher on the sand, on the beach, by the water. He sees me bending over him, reaches out with his charred hand and takes mine, and says, "Don't worry, Fish—I don't hurt ." Two hours later he dies under a canvas roof. I look at my hand that he grasped, and I remember.

A new millennium has begun. In just a few years, the greatest generation, ALL will be gone. Probably, most of what we did will be forgotten; for someone who was not there, no amount of words can ever describe the experiences and feelings that we shared. But right now, those of us, of that generation, who still are left, remember. And in these final years, we can take enormous pride in knowing that each of us was a part of it; in knowing that because of it, we leave the entire world with more personal freedom than ever before in its history.

To those night fighters we left behind when we all came home, to those who have left us since, to those who still remain—a salute! Know that you fought a good war—OUR war. Know that you are part of the GREATEST GENERATION ever. And know that YOU—NIGHT FIGHTERS—are the BEST!

\* This "vegetable trip" was from Nadzab to the Garoka air strip about 120 miles away. The Garoka strip, in the Bismarck Mountain Range in the New Guinea interior, served the Mt. Hagen Mission.

This essay is from talks presented by ROLAND FISHER at the **final** Convention of the WORLD WAR II NIGHT FIGHTERS in Salt Lake City, Utah, in July 2000. Roland served originally with the Royal Air Force in England and was the first Operations Officer with the 418th NFS.

## **Excerpts from Carroll Smith**

Col. Carroll C. Smith, USAF (Ret.), the original Commanding Officer of the 418th Night Fighter Squadron, was in command of the Squadron for two-thirds of the combat operations period during World War II, and became the leading Night Fighter Ace, before returning to the States. Carroll gave an address at the 1984 Convention of the World War II Night Fighters Association on board the Queen Mary at Long Beach, California. He later responded to a request for impressions during WWII from Prof. Stephen L. McFarland. A collection of excerpts from these presentations follows.



The war in the Pacific was much different than the European War. In the war against the Axis powers, we were up against a smart, stubborn and dedicated enemy covering an area, although large, including as it did, Europe and part of Africa, but small when compared to the Pacific War. In the Pacific, we were up against a stubborn, sometimes smart, but always fanatical enemy. Our war area was huge, covering great expanses of oceans, jungles, and mountainous land masses.

The 418th Night Fighter Squadron was the first Squadron to be deployed to the Pacific from the Night Fighter training program, from Orlando, Florida, in 1943. Its initial assignment was to New Guinea. To say it was trained, however, is stretching things. It had never fired a shot at night time or at a target before arriving in the combat zone. Its first airborne target was a Jap airplane. It is not surprising then, that the success of those first encounters was, to say the least, mixed. It did not take long to discover our shortcomings as shooters. The standard practice became to try to get to point-blank range, open fire, and if necessary, fly through the debris. This was no easy task, but it was our best chance for success. It was very difficult, for not only were you chasing an elusive and uncooperative target on a dark night, but visual identification was understandably required. Fortunately, as time went by, the replacement air crews were much better trained.

We were fortunate to have a very few pilots with previous time in the Royal Air Force. They were helpful, and their experience benefitted the rest of us. As with the other Night Fighter Squadrons, the major contributions of the 418th to the war effort was in Night intruding. While the 418th Squadron shot down more enemy planes than any other squadron, its major value was in sinking small ships and barges. One month, the 418th, with its 12 B-25H aircraft, sunk more shipping than all of the 5th Bomber Command combined. These were the Japanese primary supply lines. The destruction of aircraft and facilities on Jap airfields and attacks against troop concentrations and supply dumps also aided the war effort.

The name of this game was innovation and experimentation. The British, and the American European Theater Forces in general, were ahead in the Night Fighter field, but their knowledge, techniques, and equipment were slow to work their way into the Pacific. We know they had serious problems of their own against a stubborn enemy, and we know their priority for people and equipment was much higher than ours, but we still had to cope with our war. Crude air and ground radars (Ed. Note: The more advanced radar in the P-61 was a great improvement over the earlier system), coupled with the vast areas to be covered, created new and unusual problems. No central control of Air Defense, added even more

problems. The separate chains of command for the Army Anti-Aircraft guns, ship-borne fire power, and Army Air Force fighters, created continuing, dangerous situations. There were many entrenched "old Army" ideas, that were almost impossible to change. Where we were able to set up a combined system, making use of all weapons available, it worked pretty well. One example–on Morotai we were able to set up a combined system wherein we used our B-25s for Night intruding, to try to get the enemy aircraft, before they took off from their own airfields: an outer ring of P-61s, under radar control, and then a ring of Army Anti-Aircraft guns, and finally P-38s, overhead, using search light cooperation.

Our war was a series of challenges, many of them not enemy created. Huge oceans, endless dense jungles, tall and often uncharted mountains, an enemy with a kamakazi mentality, crude living conditions, long and uncertain supply lines, spartan food, no recreational facilities, an overall Commander, General MacArthur, whose policies did not favor Army Air Forces. All these and more contributed to a strange and frustrating war. With these common conditons to share, it is not surprising that we are such a close-knit group of people. Variations of these problems affected Night Fighter Squadrons worldwide. We were a strange and not well-understood group. Although every area had its special problems, we should discuss the problem of survival, as it applied to the Pacific. In this case, we are not talking about survival from the enemy (that was a major consideration of course), but survival from boredom. This problem is paramount in any war. But it was just more prevalent in this one. This was due to the isolation the area itself created. Compounding the problem of isolation was poor food, hot, sticky, rainy weather, and a fantastic assortment of bugs and insects. Food was always a problem, not only quality, but often quantity as well. In our area, our pet hates were bully beef and silver beets–every outfit had its pet hates. One squadron (Ed. Note: the 418th NFS!) mess tent burned to the ground while the entire squadron cheered.

Ours was a dangerous job, for everyone, and especially the aircrews. We were on the leading edge of technical development, operating in a hostile environment, where the weather, the jungle, the oceans and mountains posed a greater threat frequently than the enemy, or our own Army and Navy Anti-Aircraft guns, for that matter. The night and bad weather flying out of make-shift air-strips, and working beyond the design capabilities of much of our equipment added to the danger. Somehow we made it work; we suffered our losses and got on with our jobs to a successful conclusion. The dedication of our ground crews, I mean ALL of them, from cooks to crew chiefs, made us successful. We were truly "Orphans of the Night"; perhaps that is a bit melodramatic, but it does fit our experience. Our people had to cope with very little outside help, and they made it work. It would appear that no one recorded our deeds. The reports we did send were not kept. I know we should have done a better job at record-keeping than we did. Many did not note the aircraft shot down by night fighters, or the shipping sunk by our intruders, or aircraft destroyed on the ground. Our efforts were considerable and the results very tangible; we just were no good at keeping detailed records. At the time, it just did not seem important. (Ed. Note: In this history, "postscripts" are added in an attempt to fill in some of the gaps.)

By its very nature, Night fighting is filled with both beauty and terror. I can only speak about the air where beauty comes from looking down on fleecy clouds on a moon lit night, or flying over an active volcano at the awesome beauty of such fiery power. The terror comes when flying alone on a black night over water or isolated jungle with no navigation aids and no one on the ground responds to your radio calls, or letting down through mountain passes to find your airstrip, hoping for some help from the crude

ground radar. So much of our time in combat, we were out of touch with the ground. During Night intercept work, we were always in touch with our ground controllers; but in our intruder work, we were not.

Our work was most valuable overall, I expect, in leading the way toward our very effective all weather capability we have today. I guess we were pioneers, at least we would like to think so.

A favorite poem of Carroll Smith was:

## **Combat Pilot**

The story is now over, the chapter's closed and yet... written in my memory is a place I can't forget. Where all my boyhood dreams met the light of day and long forgotten values refused to fade away.

This place of men and heroes, the finest I would meet whose actions spoke of virtue and whose courage stood concrete. Where love took on new meaning, where friendship did, too, while the serious side of life shouted 'attention' at you.

A time for nerves of steel, when shakin' to the core,
knowing all my limits–I learned to push for more,
'cause beneath my trembling hand that mighty bird could shine,
but it was living, not power that was always on my mind.

Every call a close one, any time of day– and every flight out was another time to pray. Another mission over and I'd be worn to the bone adding hope to weary hope that I might make it home.

I never dreamed back then standing face to face with fears someday they'd be behind me; all those war-torn years. And the medals still remind me every birthday is a friend 'cause I lived to read that story, from its beginning to its end.

# **Classic Night Fighter Interception**

## By Stanley E. Logan

The Squadron history casually refers in many places to interceptions by night fighters, but just what did occur up in that vast murk? For persons not familiar with the sequence, some explanation may be helpful. An interception

by a night fighter normally involves three phases: 1) GCI (Ground Controlled Interception) controller vectors the night fighter towards the incoming bogey until onboard AI (Aircraft Interception) radar contact is made, 2) RO (Radar Observer) directs pilot until visual contact by pilot is made, and 3) pilot maneuvers into position close enough to make identification of bogey as enemy, backs off (if needed) to firing range, and fires.

Each of the phases can now be further described. The P-61 is used for reference. The SCR-720 AI radar had two scopes: one indicating azimuth and range (distance), and one indicating azimuth and elevation (degrees above or below the night fighter axis). The RO could select any of four ranges: 26,000 ft (about 5 miles), 10 miles, 20 miles, or 150 miles. The longer ranges were primarily used for navigation among the various islands. The radar scan zone was forward over an azimuth range of 90 degrees to either side of dead ahead, and an elevation range of 60 degrees up to 15 degrees down (the approach to a bogey was from slightly below). If the intercepted aircraft had IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) and it was turned on, a coded fringe would appear on the blip on the radar screen. Generally, contact would be made with an aircraft at a range of less than ten miles. (Note: we're talking here about the SCR-720). A small radar screen on the pilot's panel was not used during an interception (pilot was busy enough with instrument flying and striving for visual contact), but was used in tracking ground and water patterns for navigation.

GCI phase: GCI generally could pick up an incoming target at tens of miles and as much as 100 miles in favorable circumstances, and could obtain an altitude reading. An initial command by the GCI controller might be something like: "DARKIE3, bogey at range four-five miles, vector two-five-zero, proceed to 6,000 (feet)." The pilot would acknowledge with something like: "Roger DARKIE3, vector two-five-zero, proceed 6,000." A few minutes later, an update from GCI might be: "DARKIE3, range three-four, vector two-three-five," again acknowledged by pilot, continuing until a blip was picked up by the RO, who then would call "Contact," and radio contact with GCI would be switched off in favor of the night fighter's intercom.

RO phase: Once the RO obtained the target blip, a rapid sequence of commands and pilot acknowledgments ensued. "Port" (left) and "Starboard" (right) were used for directions. Turn rates were "gentle," "turn," "hard," speed was "throttle up" or "throttle back." Once a turn was in process, increasing or decreasing the severity was by "harder" or "ease off," and to resume dead ahead was "steady." Elevation change was by "up" or "down," perhaps with a modifier such as "gentle." If closing on an <u>incoming</u> target, the tactic was to vector to one side and at the right moment turn into the target such as to slide in slightly behind and below. This required good judgement and timing skill by the RO. The patter of commands, which at times could sound like an auctioneer, was capable of following an aircraft in hard evasive action. If the target suddenly made a diving turn and disappeared from the screen (got below the 15 degree down detection limit), the response was an immediate 90 degree banking turn in which the target could be re-accessed within the 90 degree azimuth and 60 degree up scan range. At some point in an interception, the banter might be something like: "Turn port, range 3,000 yards, down



gentle, throttle up, ease off, ... steady, range two-eight hundred..." with pilot responses in parallel. This would continue until the pilot could "obtain visual contact," and would simply say "visual," or as is sometimes stated in more dramatic accounts: "Tally Ho!"

Pilot Closure: On a bright moonlight night, a target aircraft could be readily seen at a distance of about one mile. On a dark night, engine exhaust flames could be seen at around 500 to 1,000 feet range. On a dark overcast night, approach to within 50 to 100 feet was necessary before a positive identification could be made. The ideal closure tactic was to approach from the rear and below, make positive identification, adjust as needed to firing range, pull up gently with target in gunsight and fire!

The intense pilot/RO team training resulted in the interception path to be virtually as if done by a single person. Some crews varied the commands to suit their circumstances, and sometimes the degree of familiarity was sufficient for the first syllable of a command to be adequate to initiate the flight response. Other conditions, such as dusk or dawn light, or expectation of a defensive tail gunner, altered tactics. Chance encounters in the vicinity of enemy airfields, necessarily omitted the GCI first phase.

ROSTER OF SQUADRON PERSONNEL ABOARD U.S.S. GENERAL JOHN POPE SAILING 1528 HOURS, 6 OCTOBER, 1943 FROM HAMPTON ROADS PORT OF EMBARKATION

Capt. EDWARD L. HOLSTEN, 0-917344 JACK L. POWELL, 0-915655 ROWLAND H. ROBERTSON, 0-482794 Flight Surgeon CARROLL C. SMITH, 0-418144 Commanding Officer 1 Lt. NORBERT J. DE BOER, 0-574380 RONALD H. EHNKE, 0-574495 ROLAND T. FISHER, 0-885680 LEON 0. GUNN, 0-885480 2 Lt. ELDON D. AYERS, 0-743302 Pilot EDWARD E. CRAIG, 0-743420 Pilot Pilot RICHARD F. DAY, 0-885216 HARRY D. CRUM, 0-743053 Pilot RAYMOND L. DUETHMAN, 0-530426 Radio Observer GILBERT E. EISSMAN, 0-740147 Pilot RICHARD B. FERRIS, Jr. 0-460141 Flight Commander GEORGE W. HOPES, 0-873261 Weather Officer THOMAS R. MILLER, 0-743476 Pilot WILLIAM F. ROSS, 0-745943 Pilot BARNEY N. SKILLE, 0-740291 Pilot ALBERT R. SORBO, 0-740296 HAROLD B. WHITTERN, 0-740320 FRANK G. YOUNG, 0-743558 ALEXANDER BORPOWOW Pilot F/O ALEXANDER BOBROWSKI, T-192525 Radio Observer RAYMOND J. BURKE, T-192524 Radio Observer BUNYAN A. CRAIN, T-180080 FRANK M. DUBASIK, T-192527 ELWOOID H. GARDNER, T-180018 Radio Observer NORMAN HOROWITZ, T-180014 Radio Observer GEORGE N. KERSTETTER, T-192530 Radio Observer

FRED S. LARKINS, T-180011Radio ObserverPHILIP B. PORTER, T-180059Radio ObserverKENNETH P. RITTER, T-192538Radio ObserverPROSPER F. RUFER, T-180060Radio Observer WILLLIAM F. SHERMAN, T-192530 Radio Observer

Intelligence Officer Executive Officer Adjutant Statistical Officer\* Operations Officer Flight Commander Radio Observer Radio Observer

#### FIRST FLIGHT

2 Lt.	CHARLES E. LALANE, JR, 0-375276	Asst.Intelligence 0.
1 Sgt.	RUSSELL R. HUBBLE, 16006959	First Sergeant
S/Sgt.	ARTHUR L. LEVY, 39169853	Medical Administrative Spec.
_	JOHN H. WAINWRIGHT, 37247766	Intelligence Specialist
	DONALD G. WESTFALL., 35378875	Mess Sergeant
Sgt.	DONALD J. ALEXANDER, 17156845	Cook
	WILLIAM CERVINO, 13152041	Cook
	ROBERT E. GOEBELT, 37658756	Intelligence Clerk
	MIKE LIBERATORE, 32545835	Medical Administrative Spec.
	SAMUEL MAZZA, 32240811	Cook
	PEDRO SANCHEZ, 19057969	Cook
	NEIL D. WINTER, 36559564	Personnel Clerk
Cpl.	WARREN E. CLACKETT, 32613069	Intelligence Clerk
	MURRAY H. FOGEL, 32716930	Administrative Clerk

Cpl.	FRANK K. GAMBER, 13053496	Cook
-	MURRY GERSHBERG, 32704271	Administrative Clerk
	ROBERT P. HEYDT, 33370980	Medic
	ERICH R. LUNDSTROM, 32507308	Cook
	MATTHEW J. MACUGOWSKI,32550133	Medic
	HUGH J. MILLER, 34606555	Personnel Clerk
	JAMES W. PILLING,33170380	Cook
	JULIUS J. TOTH, 13177441	Cook
	NORMAN F. BERRIG, 31230896	Medic
Pfc.	SALVATORE J. CONTI, 32870381	Carpenter
	RAYMONT T. FRENCH, 6914612	Sergeant Major
	EUGENE F. GERAGHTY, 32607033	Medic
	JOHN A. PALCIC, 35746532	Medic
	MICHAEL A. TORTORA, 32811926	Cook
	JOHN A. WATSON, 32754905	
Pvt.	HERSCHEL F. BOWEN, 33562624	Basic
	SAMUEL A. COSTA, 33439894	Basic
	WALLACE E. FASSOIS, 32822780	Basic
	ROCCO S. FERRARA, 32826588	Basic
	ARTHUR V. GOLDEN, 31315941	Medic
	BERNARD W. HERBERT, 3345472	Basic
	EUGENE PENNINGTON, 33562482	Messenger
	DOUGLAS H. ROARK, 35792281	Basic
	BELO A. SZOBAD, 32717741	Basic
	MERVIN L. WELLING, 33561653	
	FREDERICK T. WILLIS, 33629245	Basic

#### SECOND FLIGHT

T/Sgt.	HENRY S. HOWE, 0-572080 ANTHONY P. TURSE, 13045448 BERT HARPER, 33247948 JOE W. HOLMAN, 38190442 LAMAR W. PEEL, 18053576	Radar Mechanic Radar Mechanic
Sgt.	CLIFFORD C. ANGELO, 18136520 CLIFFORD C. ANGELO, 18136520 CHARLES R.E.BADGER, 130911353 ELVIN G. EHLERS, 39251111 ROBERT M. FONTAINE, 33578459 JOHN S. GILL, 31270231 CHARLES E. GRAY, 34128740 JOHN P. GUINANE, 12144365 JOHN B. HAWKINS, 34353279 BENJAMIN F. HAYS, 34355259 RICHARD C. HOOKER, 19099360 ROY A. KERSHNER, 35438458 ROBERT W. LEVINGS, 17159278 HARRY D. LOVETT, 33154782 DELMAR D. NOTESTINE, 3537799 VERNON A. PATTERSON, 38447259 WARREN C. PINCKERT, 37384830 LEON M. SWEET, 12024961 SAMUEL 0. TOMLINSON, 34381781	Radar Mechanic Radar Mechanic Radar Mechanic Tech Supply Clerk Squad Supply Clerk Radar Mechanic Radar Mechanic Radar Mechanic Radar Mechanic Radar Mechanic Tech Supply Clerk Radar Mechanic Radar Mechanic Duty NCO Radar Mechanic Motor Transportation NCO
Cpl.	BENEDICT J. DE MARCO, 32801137	

\* On Detached Service

Cpl. Pfc.	CHARLES R. FERGUSON, 32487778 ROBERT A. FLINT, 32487775 ROBERT J. STOLTMAN, 36555618 GEORGE A. WALZ, 32711994 CLAIR E. LLOYD, 33756750 TILFORD D. PARSONS, 33601899 JOSEPH M. PATACKIS, 36556940 ROBERT H. SINGER, 15323713	Tech Supply Clerk Squad Supply Clerk Dispatcher Automotive Mechanic Automotive Mechanic Tech Supply Clerk Automotive Mechanic
	CURTIS L. SLAUGHTER, 33562555	Automotive Mechanic
	THIRD FLIG	HT
2 Lt.	,	Communications Officer
S/Sgt.	ROBERT E. GORMAN, 6937149 FRANK J. GROLLER, 33188385	Communications Chief Radio Mechanic
	ALBERT M. MC CULLOCH, 18034647	Radio Mechanic
Sgt.	OAKIE HOPPER, 37332111	Radio Mechanic
	JESSE J. JONES, 332221420	Radio Mechanic
	JOHN 0. MC WHORTER,JR, 18232046 EUGENE H. MITCHELL, 37411900	Teletype Mechanic Communications Clerk
	WELMER Z. SMITH, JR., 34409788	Radio Mechanic
	D. S. THOMPSON, JR., 6394019	Radio Mechanic
	LUTHER T. WATERBURY, 37227340	Radio Mechanic
	HALFORD S. WRIGHT, JR.,34406702	Radio Mechanic
Cpl.	THOMAS M. BEWICK, 33358194	Radio Mechanic
	PAUL A. GLAD, 33499457	Teletype Operator
	CARL H. HEPP, 37457764 WALTER D. HILL, 35370949	Radio Mechanic Radio Mechanic
	LOUIS P. HOLECZY, 33309819	Teletype Mechanic
	FRANK F. KLITZING, 36330413	Radio Mechanic
	ROBERT F. MACINTYRE, 12181896	Radio Mechanic
	WILLIAM MATISCHOWSKI, 32635551	Radio Mechanic
	ROBERT F. MELHORN, 35423978	Radio Mechanic
	LESTER J. PECKLER, 37461732	Radio Mechanic
	CHARLES J. RIELING, 39387510	Radio Mechanic
	LEONARD S. RUNTON, 33169723	Radio Mechanic
	JOHN SMITH, 32453170 BENEFIEL M. STEVENS, 35575578	Radio Mechanic Radio Mechanic
	DAVID 0. SULLIVAN, 13144652	Radio Mechanic
	ALLEN H. THOMAS, 33247223	Radio Mechanic
	LUKE. L. WALKER, JR., 38273562	Radio Operator
	LEWIS F. WEEKS, JR., 34408841	Radio Mechanic
	PETER P. WHIPLAND, 12203192	Radio Mechanic
Pfc.	CLARENCE M. ASP, 36240844	Utility Repair Man
	ERNEST N. FERRARI, 33205734	Radio Mechanic
	HARRY R. GLOVER, 32728437	Teletype Operator
	MELVIN R. GORDON, 34688203	Mail Man
	JAMES M. MEWBORN, 34582465	Switchboard Operator
Pvt.	ROBERT E. NELSON, 15324947 JOSEPH G. FULLER, 18157326	Radio Mechanic Radio Mechanic
EVL.	STEVE G. GASPAROVIC, 33440370	Messenger
	CHESLEY A. STRICKLAND, 15353725	Utility Repair Man

1 Lt.	WALTER L. WEINBURG, 0-860582	Armament Officer
T/Sgt.	HAROLD H. DRY, 6570139	Armament Chief
	HORACE H. LANE, 14022386	Turret Specialist
Sgt.	JOE H. COX, 18231318	Turret Specialist
5	EDMUND H. JAMES, 32614614	Turret Specialist
	HORACE E. KELLY, JR., 20882011	Camera Technician
	DONALD LIPMAN, 12155475	Airplane Armorer
	RAYMOND K. MARQUART, 33380302	Ordnance NCO
	JAMES N. ROWLAND, 39395157	Turret Specialist
	MAXWELL SEGAL, 13080151	Decontaminating Eq.Op.
Cpl.	WILLIAM H. ADAMS, JR., 14187950	Armament Clerk
Cpr.	HOWARD P. FLEMING, 34447399	Armament Inspector
	DONALD R. FOX, 12159528	Airplane Armorer
	ROBERT J. GANLEY, 32703522	Ordnance Armorer
	ROBERT M. GLOVER, 32529158	Airplane Armorer
	MORRIS GREENFIELD, 32703082	Ordnance Armorer
	FREDERICK S. GREYBACK, 32667947	Ordnance Armorer
	PAUL N. HUBER, 32478819	Airplane Armorer
	WILLIAM H. JORDAN, 18170941	Airplane Armorer
	DANIEL KLEIN, 33473859	Ammo Supply Tech
	ELMER J. KOEHLER, 37315779	Airplane Armorer
	FRANK MATARAZZI, 39397415	Airplane Armorer
	WILLIAM M. MC CLEVEY, 16128556	Ord Supply Tech
	CHARLES T. MORRIS, 18083620	Airplane Armorer
	WALTER F. MULVIHILL, 12153110	Airplane Armorer
	ARCHILLES W. NAPOLEON, 32577536	Airplane Armorer
	WILLIAM NELSON, 12180899	Airplane Armorer
	ANTHONY P. ROBERTO, JR., 15337386	Airplane Armorer
	RICHARD C. ROSS, 6549150	Decontaminating Eq.Op.
	PAUL SMELTZER, JR., 35542935	Ammo Supply Tech
	NORMAN R. STUBER, 37498552	Airplane Armorer
Pfc.	CARL GRAFMULLER, JR., 12153535	Airplane Armorer
110.	GEORGE P. GYURISIN, 32459672	Airplane Armorer
	WALLACE HELPINGSTINE, 16145016	Airplane Armorer
	WINSTON B. HIGGINS, 31111256	Airplane Armorer
	DURWARD W. KILGORE, 34442184	Airplane Armorer
	LYNWOOD LOWE, 31197457	Ammunition Handler
	SIVIO MARCANTONIO, 32744067	Ammunition Handler
	ROBERT D. MURRAY, 35563391	Airplane Armorer
	RUSSELL C. OETTING, 15373960	Airplane Armorer
	SEYMOUR SCHARFSTEIN, 12155964	Airplane Armorer
	SAMUEL SELZER, 32729147	Airplane Armorer
Pvt.	EDWARD W. BEAGLE, 36417051	Camera Technician
	JOHN KEATING, 35531047	Ammo Handler
	HAROLD A. GUIDGEON, 31193866	Airplane Armorer

#### FIFTH FLIGHT

1 Lt.	MILLARD F. HALL, 0-860502	Engineering Officer
S/Sgt.	WILLIAM CHALIF, 36323337	Operations Chief
	CURRAN W. HALEY, 19074817	Airplane Maint Tech
	JOHN C. MALONE, 16033961	Flight Chief
	RICHARD P. WIER, 16018481	Line Chief
Sgt.	ROBERT E. BOSSINGHAM, 15333757	Airplane Elec Tech
	WILLIAM J. BURNE, 32395849	Airplane Maint Tech
	DONALD C. DEFEE, 38207722	Airplane Sheet Mtl Wrkr

Sqt. JAMES R. FERST, 35462171 Airplane Prop Mech ARTHUR KLEINER, 32405970 RICHARD S. MARRELLI, 32733144 GLENDON E. MORSE, 31155778 PAUL REGGETTZ, JR., 6896895 HENRY C. STAMPLEY, 18180214 SAMUEL SUSSMAN, 32727082 Machinist LORING F. TUELLS, 31134419 JAMES E. AHERN, 39407435 Cpl. ANDREW J. COBB, 34336058 WILLIAM B. FLYNN, JR., 35484596 LEO A. GIES, 35694927 WALTER J. GLEASON, 32733677 ROBERT E. GREENE, 15382425 WALTER HIRSCH, 12158104 GEORGE E. KOPPLEMAN, 33374139 EDWARD E. MACINTOSH, 33331008 THOMAS D. MILLER, 38366029 Painter CLEMENT P. SALERNO, 33496394 MYRON D. SEVERSON, 12180899 LOUIS E. D. SMITH, 18150975 ROBERT A. SMITH, JR., 38452947 Pfc. MARCUS E. BREWER, 14153424 RALPH J. CLAUSON, 31174339 JAMES W. FORD, 12047185 KAI G. HANSEN, 35350168 JAMES S. PYLES, 35750698 WILLIAM D. THORNE, 12178739 Carpenter Pvt. ALFRED J. MUISE, 31301511 Machinist DONALD W. OLSON, 16034257 CARROLL C. WASSON, 36449990 Welder JAMES WIND, 38402720

Airplane Maint Tech Airplane Elec. Mech Instrument Specialist Special Veh. Operator Airplane Maint Tech Airplane Maint Tech Operations Clerk Airplane & Engine Mech Airplane & Engine Mech Operations Clerk Weather Clerk Airplane Prop Mech Engineering Clerk Airplane Inst Mech Sheetmetal Worker Engineering Clerk Airplane Maint Tech Operations Clerk Parachute Rigger Refueling Operator Airplane & Engine Mech Airplane & Engine Mech Airplane & Engine Mech Refueling Operator Refueling Operator Truck Driver

#### SIXTH FLIGHT

	EMANUEL BROOKMYER, 0-1554142 GEORGE L. BILLINGSLEY, 6955886 WILLIAM E. MASTRONGELO, 6914426 JOSEPH M. MURPHY, 11040079	Flight Chief Crew Chief
s/sgt.	GEORGE L. DE HAVEN, 12168355 FRANK W. FARQUHAR, 17038075	Aerial Gunner Aerial Gunner Aerial Gunner Aerial Gunner Crew Chief Aerial Gunner Aerial Gunner
Sgt.	GEORGE J. MITCHELL, 36123884 ALVAR C. IVERSON, 33271372 WILLIAM D. MAYO, 34407099 RUSSELL F. RECTOR, 19096446 WILLIAM J. WEINFURTHER,13060134	Crew Chief Aerial Gunner Aerial Gunner
Cpl.	•	Airplane & Engine Mech Crew Chief

Cpl.	RAYMOND V. PAOLA, 13105477	Crew Chief
	JOHN E. EPLER, 33503291	Dope and Fabric Worker
	GEORGE MASCHENIK, 161272148	Airplane & Engine Mech
	ROBERT L. MOREY, 32549945	Airplane & Engine Mech
	JOHN A. MULDOON, 37418235	Airplane & Engine Mech
	VINCENT P. PADULA, 11089735	Airplane & Engine Mech
	JASPER M. PIERCE, 34179074	Airplane & Engine Mech
	CHARLES R. SMITH, 32140638	Airplane & Engine Mech
	MERWIN L. SMITH, 37420265	Airplane & Engine Mech
	JOHN R. STOUTENBURG, 19013894	Crew Chief
Pfc.	ROGER I. KING, 32574630	Airplane & Engine Mech
	JAMES J. LAMENDOLA, 32325663	Airplane & Engine Mech
	HAROLD 0. MEADOWS, 35700246	Airplane & Engine Mech
	RAYMOND M. PASZCYAK, 12172332	Airplane & Engine Mech
	LEON C. SJOBERG, 37281039	Airplane & Engine Mech
	WALTER A. WAYRICK, 34361491	Airplane & Engine Mech
Pvt.	MIGUEL J. APODACA, 39277487	Aerial Gunner
	RAYMOND F. CURRAN, 32815966	Aerial Gunner
	MARTIN J. FALENDYS, 36600081	Airplane & Engine Mech
	RAYMOND GERSHOWITZ, 32815966	Airplane & Engine Mech
	EDGAR G. GREGG, JR., 13038526	Airplane & Engine Mech
	MORAD W. HASSEY, 11041684	Airplane & Engine Mech
	GORDON L. HIGLEY, 16071156	Aerial Gunner
	JAMES E. MC CURDY, 17063249	Airplane & Engine Mech
	ROBERT E. SLENKER, 6902240	Airplane Inspector

The Squadron roster totals on the ship were:

Officers	41
Enlisted Men	238
Total	279

This roster was retyped by Samuel O. Tomlinson, from an original copy.

The twelve Flight Officers on the first roster page are identified as "**Radio** Observer." In fact, their function was "**Radar** Observer," but security restrictions at the time apparently attempted to disguise the fact that we had and were using airborne radar.

19 August 1945

To the Men of the Fifth Air Force:

Three years ago the Fifth Air Force commenced the fight which now finds us at the approaches to Tokyo. Three years ago we commenced our campaigns against a vicious, arrogant enemy determined to destroy our way of living. Now, that enemy is broken and defeated by you.

Darwin, Moresby, Buna, Tsili Tsili, Lae, Nadzab, Gusap, Hollandia, Cape Gloucester, Wakde, Biak, Morotai, Leyte, Mindoro, Luzon, Ryukyus, and Japan bear witness to your victories. Each campaign against an always numerically superior and fanatical foe resulted in your triumph and his overwhelming defeat.

For the first time in the history of warfare, a nation has surrendered to an enemy separated by three hundred and fifty miles of open sea. You are the first to achieve complete victory through air power.

I congratulate you! You are conquerors!

My pride in the Fifth Air Force prompts me to remind you that we are about to occupy a nation of militarists who have been trained from childhood to respect nothing but armed force. For many of these militarists the present armistice is merely a breathing spell in their idea of a hundred years war. If we are to break this idea, there are several things we must do.

First, we must prove to the Japanese people that Japan cannot mechanically compete with us. This will be done by our overwhelming demonstration of mechanical might and mobility, our airplanes, trucks and tanks.

Secondly, we must demonstrate that free men, properly disciplined and trained, form an Army that enslaved people cannot produce. To do this, essentials of military customs and courtesies must be observed. Now is the time to commence in order that our entry into the Japanese homeland will be a deterrent of any future wars which the military clique may have in mind.

Commencing now I charge each of you with proper observance of uniform regulations, with daily shaving, with correct military posture and attitude, and proper saluting. I charge all Commanders, Officers and Non Commissioned Officers with the responsibilities for the enforcement of these rules. Only by personal demonstration to the Japanese People that we are better soldiers than they can ever be, can we overcome the insidious hopes of the Japanese militarists of world conquest.

/s/Ennis C. Whitehead

ENIS C. WHITEHEAD Lieutenant General,U. S. A. Commanding

HEADQUARTERS FIFTH AIR FORCE APO 710

AG 201.22

20 August 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO: All Fifth Air Force Unit Commanders.

The following message has been received from Commanding General, Far East Air Forces:

THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM COMGENAIR TO BE PASSED TO ALL UNITS UNDER YOUR COMMAND: "THE BRILLIANT OFFENSIVE OF THE FAR EAST AIR FORCES UNDER INSPIRING LEADERSHIP WAS AN OUTSTANDING FACTOR IN JAPAN'S DEFEAT. LOOKING BACK TO THE HEROIC OPERATIONS OF THE EARLY WAR IN WHICH, GRAVELY OUTNUMBERED AND UNDERSUPPLIED, YOU AROSE FROM THE DUST OF THE PORT MORESBY STRIPS TO STOP THE AUSTRALIA-BOUND JAPS IN THEIR TRACKS, IT MAY BE TRUTHFULLY SAID THAT NO AIR COMMANDER EVER DID SO MUCH WITH SO LITTLE. ALL THAT YOU HAVE DONE SINCE HAS MADE AIR HISTORY. THE ARMY AIR FORCES HONOR YOUR FIGHTING SPIRIT, TO WHICH WE SO LARGELY OWE TODAY'S SPLENDID TRIUMPH. SIGNED ARNOLD."

BY COMMAND OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL WHITEHEAD:

/s/T.A. Fitzpatrick T.A. FITZPATRICK Colonel AC Adj Gen

A TRUE COPY

Is/Ronald H. Ehmke RONALD H. EHMKE Captain, Air Corps

# INSTRUMENT OF SURRENDER

e, acting by command of and in behalf of the Emperor of Japan, the Japanese Government and the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters, hereby accept the provisions set forth in the declaration issued by the heads of the Governments of the United States, China and Great Britain on 26 July 1945, at Potsdam, and subsequently adhered to by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which four powers are hereafter referred to as the Allied Powers.

We hereby proclaim the unconditional surrender to the Allied Powers of the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters and of all Japanese armed forces and all armed forces under Japanese control wherever situated.

We hereby command all Japanese forces wherever situated and the Japanese people to cease hostilities forthwith, to preserve and save from damage all ships, aircraft, and military and civil property and to comply with all requirements which may be imposed by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers or by agencies of the Japanese Government at his direction.

We hereby command the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters to issue at once orders to the Commanders of all Japanese forces and all forces under Japanese control wherever situated to surrender unconditionally themselves and all forces under their control.

We hereby command all civil, military and naval officials to obey and enforce all proclamations, orders and directives deemed by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers to be proper to effectuate this surrender and issued by him or under his authority and we direct all such officials to remain at their posts and to continue to perform their non-combatant duties unless specifically relieved by him or under his authority.

We hereby undertake for the Emperor, the Japanese Government and their successors to carry out the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration in good faith, and to issue whatever orders and take whatever action may be required by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers or by any other designated representative of the Allied Powers for the purpose of giving effect to that Declaration.

We hereby command the Japanese Imperial Government and the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters at once to liberate all allied prisoners of war and civilian internees now under Japanese control and to provide for their protection, care, maintenance and immediate transportation to places as directed.

The authority of the Emperor and the Japanese Government to rule the state shall be subject to the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers who will take such steps as he deems proper to effectuate these terms of surrender.

Signed at TOKYO BAY, JAPAN at 0904. I on the \_\_\_\_\_\_SECOND \_\_\_\_\_day of \_\_\_\_\_SEPTEMBER\_\_\_ 

By Command and in behalf of the Emperor of Japan and the Japanese Government.

By Command and in behalf of the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters.

Accepted at \_\_\_\_\_ TOKYO BAY, JAPAN \_\_\_\_\_ at\_\_\_ 0908 SECOND day of SEPTÉMBER on the\_ for the United States, Republic of China, United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and in the interests of the other United Nations at war with Japan.

Jourgas Was Catt Supremy Commander for the Allied Powers.

W. Muntz

United States Representative

徐永恩

Republic of China Representative

Bree Kaser United Kingdom Representative

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Union of Seviet Socialist Republics Representative

lament

Commonwealth of Austrolia Representetive

or Eng

Dominion of Canada Representative

Provisional Government of the French Republie Representative

nic Kingdom of the Netherlands Representative man

Dominion of New Zealand Representative

# **For Further Reading**

Excellent books for further reading about development of U.S. Air Forces Night Fighters and the P-61 Black Widow in particular:

"Queen of the Midnight Skies; the Story of America's Air Force Night Fighters," by Garry R. Pape & Ronald C. Harrison, 1992, 368 pp. Published by Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 4880 Lower Valley Rd., Atglen, PA 19310

"Northrup P-61 Black Widow, The Complete History and Combat Record" by Garry R. Pape with John M. and Donna Campbell, 1991, 144 pp. Published Motorbooks International Publishers & Wholesalers, P.O. Box 2, 729 Prospect Ave., Osceola, WI.

"Northrup P-61 Black Widow," by Warren E. Thompson, 1997, 100 pp Published as Warbird Tech Series Volume 15, by Specialty Press Publishers and Wholesalers, 11481 Kost Dam Road, North Branch, MN 55056

"P-61 Black Widow Units of World War 2," by Warren Thompson, 1998, 96 pp. Published as Osprey Combat Aircraft 8 by Osprey Publishing, Elms Court, Chapel Way, Botley, Oxford OX2 9LP, United Kingdom.

"Pilot's Manual for Northrop P-61 Black Widow,"1977, 80 pp, Aircraft Manual Series published by Aviation Publications, 213-217 East Washington St., Box 357, Appleton, WI 54912-0357.

(too bad we didn't have this when we were flying them!)

### P-61B Black Widow restoration

A P-61B crashed on Mt. Cyclops at Hollandia, New Guinea on 10 January 1945. The Mid Atlantic Air Museum in Reading, Pennslyvania began a recovery project in 1980 and completed the recovery in early 1991. The museum is currently restoring this famous World War II aircraft to flying condition with the help of volunteers and contributions from the interested public.

Mid Atlantic Air Museum 11 Museum Drive Reading, PA 19605

Web site: www.maam.org Email: maam@avialantic.com **Personal Notes** 

**Personal Notes** 

**Personal Notes**