



The Crow Flight

Seventh newsletter of the 47th and 48th Bomb Squadrons, 41st Bomb Group (M), 7th AF, WWII, issued December 10, 1998



The beginning of a tradition.... if you look very carefully you can see a "Ray," written at the bottom center of this picture, which means that Jess C. "Ray" Ramaker sent it to your editor in 1945, and we've exchanged Christmas cards ever since!

*Merry Christmas!!
Happy New Year!*

A REUNION PLANNING MEETING was held at the Marriott Ontario Airport, Oct. 27, 1998. Present from the 396th were LaVerne and Keith Ingstad, Joyce Haddock and Walt Winner, from the 48th Esther and Felix Galyean, Helen and Paul Hopson, and Dick Monzingo, from the 47th Dorothy and Don Haskell, Kemary Crowder, Kallie Sitterley, and Polly and Kem Sitterley. Murray Bywater, 41st, and Skip Thrune, 820th both had indicated they would have come but they had prior commitments out of town. The hotel people could not have been nicer. They had a lovely lunch for us in their coffee shop. The Marriott folks, Quentin Roberts and his assistant, Christin, initialed off a few changes in the contract, and three of us signed it off as well as a representative of each of our three squadrons. More details on Page 2....

Notes from George....

At last my blood pressure and blood sugar have receded sufficiently since the debacle in April to express both my thanks to those who responded to my efforts to locate former members of the 47th Bomb Sqdn and to apologize to those who attended the April reunion. My deepest sympathy to those wives and relatives who notified me that their spouse or father is now deceased.

Despite the lack of coordination and the totally inadequate space for a hospitality room for visiting, entertainment, and a business meeting at the past reunion, for which I accept full responsibility, I feel we have made some progress since the '96 reunion. There is now a Sqdn newsletter, and an expanded personnel roster published to keep members informed and to stay in contact. A current roster, incidentally, is a part of this newsletter. My thanks to Don for his work on the roster, to Guts for handling the money and to Kem for doing the newsletter.

One of the things desperately needed is input from all of you, your wartime and post-war-time experiences that you would like to have published, in addition to any ideas you feel will make our informal association better.

Kem, the current reunion Coordinator and Editor, will provide you with information about the next reunion and I will sign off by wishing you a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

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CAROLYN SCHOENWETTER (that's German for "lovely weather"), President of Custom Leisure Services, spent about three hours with us. The consensus was that the Getty Center would be by far the biggest draw, so we would have a bus going there both Saturday and Sunday. A second tour on Saturday would be going to the March AFB Museum where the 41st Bomb Group Memorial is located and then on to the Chino Air Museum where we can get the B-25 rides. A second tour on Sunday might be going to Universal Studios. Tentative costs on the three tours would be \$25 for the Getty, \$45 for the March-Chino, and \$55.00 for the Universal. A twenty-minute B-25 ride at Chino would be an additional \$130.

MONEY MAN – Walt Winner, Treasurer of the 396th. He will approve all billing, and then work out with the respective squadron money guys what the fair share of each is, collect their checks and pay off the vendors.

TOUR MAN – Keith Ingstad, 396th, will handle our relationship with Carolyn of Custom Leisure Tours and/or whoever else figuring out just how many tours we want and to where, etc.

GOLF – Dick Monzingo, 48th will determine where we

will go and coordinate all activities.

INTERNET – Don Haskell, 47th, will look into the problems of making the internet come through one of the TV's... deciding, "do we even want one?" Etc.

AUDIO-VISUAL – This is the responsibility of Paul Hopson, 48th, who will determine just what equipment we need, what part the hotel will furnish and what part we may have to buy or bring from home, etc. This will include whatever is necessary in the Members Club, our hospitality suites, and the banquet room.

FAVORS — This is a real puzzler. We've had some dreary ones... people moan when you mention baseball caps, T-shirts, souvenir type stuff. The place mat went over fairly well last time; one person commented that he was actually using it as a place mat, whereas, our original thought that even though we called it a place mat, it would mostly be used as a wall hanging; so it follows that we might use the same place mat except with a heavier coating, which would make it more useful as an actual place mat..... one idea is for some sort of banner or flag which could be flown under the US flag in front of your house on those holidays that are appropriate. Another thought would be a cloisonne key chain with a B-25, and/or 7th AF and/or 41st Bomb Group. It's bad with the jewelry because we need a minimum of a 100 items... And right now we are projecting about 70 veterans and 60 wives.... so any piece of jewelry needs to be appropriate for both genders and all squadrons. Help!

BANQUET – Honor guard presenting the colors ... invocation... memoriam... reports from each of the squadron leaders... Murray Bywater with a few words and a report on the 41st Bomb Group memorial, which was all his baby all along.... And if the main speaker might be a friend of his.. Say a high ranking officer in the USAF giving a talk on where the service is today and where it's going... Murray could introduce the main speaker of the evening... Do we want music? A big band. Three strolling violinists? Do we want a dance floor? On and on...

WE NEED HELP ... so I am enclosing a roster in this newsletter so that anyone who has an idea can call anyone of his choosing. Also enclosed in this mailing is a postcard, which we need you to spend a minute on, stamp it, and drop in the mail. This would be invaluable to the planning committee! **NEXT MEETING, MONDAY, JAN. 26, 1999, 10 AM.**



THE CROW FLIGHT is a publication of the 47th and 48th Bomb Squadrons, 41st Bomb Group, 7th Air Force, World War II. The more or less unelected folks for the 47th are: Head guy, **George Tolbert**, RR#3, Box 445, BRISTOW, OK 74010 (918) 367-5988, e-mail geosplace@aol.com -- Money guy **Urban A. "Gutts" Gutting**, 7047 Autumn Chase Dr., SAN ANTONIO, TX 78238 (210) 647-1651, e-mail urbang@juno.com -- Info guy **Maurice "Smitty" Smith**, 2575 South Willow, FRESNO, CA 93725, (209) 264-7361 -- Roster guy, **Donald Haskell**, 1510 S. Peppertree Ct., VISALIA, CA 93277-8606, (209) 732-1553, e-mail dhaskell@mindinfo.com WEB site <http://members.tripod.com/~dhaskell> -- Nerd guy and editor, **Kem Sitterley**, 20449 Blue Mountain Dr., WALNUT, CA 91789-1001, (626) 965-2129, or (909) 595-4451 (fax possible at this number but you gotta call first so I can push a button), e-mail ksitterley@linkline.com, WEB site <http://www.linkline.com/personal/ksitterley>



48th correspondents are **John Helmer**, 2122 S. W. Vista Av., PORTLAND, OR 97201. (503) 222-4614, and **Jess (Ray) Ramaker**, 17217 N. E. 7th Pl, BELLEVUE, WA 98008-4134 (425) 747-2306 e-mail ramajess@aol.com



47th 's CONTRIBUTION TO MEMORIAL – after much e-mailing and discussion, it was decided to send Murray Bywater \$300 as the contribution from our treasury for the **41st Bomb Group Memorial at March AFB**. Murray has now covered all of his out-of-pocket costs of \$2,400 plus a little bit to cover future maintenance costs (he has already made a couple of small improvements) including a plaque naming the contributors. Several individuals from all four squadrons have also made personal donations. According to a note received from Murray, at the present time, the plaque will name the four squadrons plus Donald Haskell, Gene Olsen, Glenn Penner, Wayne A. Hansen, Frank Ciarochi, Jerome Prazak, Tom W. Smith, Lester M. Berry, Curt Oaks, Bill Zingery, Urban A. Gutting, Kemble U. Sitterley, and Murray A. Bywater. I'm sure there will be more before the plaque is actually ordered.

ARIZONA AEROSPACE FOUNDATION

somehow found out about us and wrote asking for data for their archives. I sent them a couple place mats, hoping that they would have wall space or poster rack space for them along with Newsletter #5. They sent us a very gracious thank you note saying that the info would be on file. **Arnold Sayer is doing some research on where to put our squadron archives..** perhaps this would be interesting to him.

NEIL CHERRY ILL – A note from Maxine, "... Your newsletter and information re the reunion in San Antonio received and most appreciated. Neil was always so enthusiastic about the 'get-togethers' but his condition is such that I haven't shown him the letter. **He has had Alzheimers for the last four years and is in very poor condition.** I thank you for remembering him..." and then a second note dated Aug. 31, 1998, "Neil passed away August 24, 1998 in a local hospital from complications of Alzheimers.... He was always very interested in the Reunions and attended some prior to the onset of his illness." Our most sincere condolences to Maxine.

VINCENT BARGER – "...have been working with George Tolbert. I was Bombardier-Navigator in 47th .. Flew 53 missions, came back and reupped by going into pilot training. War ended came home. Nice to know of you guys work in keeping 41st Group going."

DONALD P. STINE – A note from two trustees reads, **"Please update your records to reflect that Don Stine passed away 3/16/98.** Accordingly, please discontinue any mailings to the below address:... Donald P. Stine, 500 N., Tully – Space # 52, Turlock, CA 95380. Thank you."

WILMER L. DIETRICK – "... our sincere thanks for the newsletters.. **My husband has lost his hearing and has other health problems but he really appreciated reading these newsletters.** He recognized several names from his outfit, 47th Bombardment..."

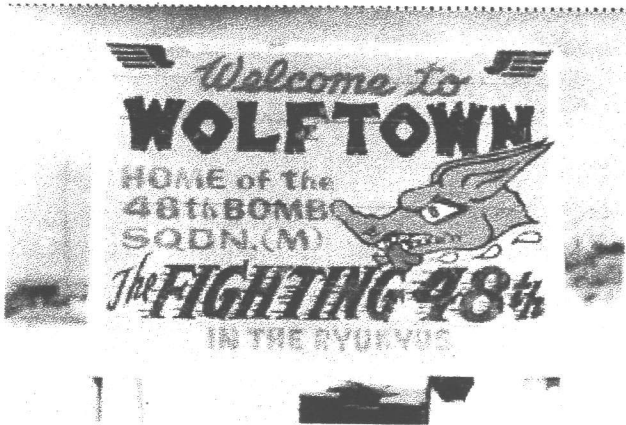
JAMES C. BOWLES, JR. – A nice note from James C. Bowles III, dated August 18, 1998. "This is to inform you that James C. Bowles, Jr. **has passed away.** His address was 1752 Yadkin Valley Road, Advance, NC 27006. **Dad always enjoyed getting your newsletter.** Thanks for sending it to him."

URBAN A. GUTTING, our money guy reports that our bank balance as of October 31, 1998, is \$2,403.41. I am happy to report that after much talking back and forth with various members of the squadron, it was decided to donate \$300.00 to the 41st Bomb Group Memorial at the March Air Force Base Museum and that check was forwarded to Murray A. Bywater, Brig. Gen, Rtd. Our good guys since the last newsletter are Donna Daulton (Haskell), Michael Haskell, Eldon Ray Ford, Dale Storms, Leroy Julian, Ricardo Rondinelli, Kenneth Farner, Paul Kenway, Stephen Gutting, Steve Pappas, Wilmer Dietrick, and Frank Ciarochi, R. A. Worsnop, Donald Lighthall, Norman Simco, Steve Gutting.



820TH REUNION REMINDER!! It will be held at the Colorado Springs Marriott, May 13-19, 1999. Among the activities planned is a trip to the Air Force Academy. There surely is a lot of beautiful scenery around this part of the country. It should be a memorable experience for all. Remember that it has always been a policy of all of the squadrons to make welcome anyone that served with the 41st Bomb Group.

UPDATE ON ELECTROCUTION AT THE BOAT DOCK GAS PUMP– I have been collecting info... got three reports from the last newsletter. I plan very soon to submit my info to 60 Minutes, 20/20, and Nightline... and if I get no reponse, I will send it in to the action reporters of the TV stations in the Los Angeles area.



NORVEL F. McCAWLEY PASSES AWAY

– excerpts from a letter from Mary W. McCawley, “My husband... died on April 29, 1998. He served in the Air Force four and a half years, two and a half in the South Pacific, during World War II. He always wanted to attend a reunion but was never able to do so. He had fond memories of the men he served with and kept up with a few of them until they passed away.”

Robert N. Smith... A nice note dated August 20, 1998, “Hi John, I wanted to attend the last reunion in San Antonio, but for health reasons, I could not make it. I start chemo treatment next Thursday, which should help solve many problems.

I’ve been planning to send a check for some time. Somehow, I never did. Enclosed is a check for \$50 for back dues and mailing. If this is not sufficient, I will make it up at a later date. If there is any extra, please put it in the kitty.

I think it’s a great idea for the four squadrons to get together. Many of us trained in our specialties before crew assignment and have good friends in other squadrons. I do enjoy receiving the ‘Crow Flight.’ Please keep me on the mailing list.” Signed Robert N. and Mary J. Smith.

Info from John Helmer.....

We are all looking forward to our next reunion, the 48th Bomb Sq. joining with the 47th and 396th in Ontario, CA in Oct. 1999.

Special thanks go to Esther and Felix Galyean and Dick Monzingo for representing the 48th at the planning meetings with Kem Sitterley and his committee. Dick is in charge of the golf outing, with Esther and Felix helping out. All three plan to play.

We have \$1,086.18 in our savings account. The last mailing cost to our 48th Sq. people was \$161.79.

We have received monies from the following people since our last newsletter: Bruce W. Atkinson, Robert Smith, W. P. Telega, Preston Benfield., and John Geidel.

To keep our newsletters coming please repond with your 1998 and/or 1999 dues @ \$10.00 per year. Please send to John Helmer, Jr., 2122 S.W. Vista Ave., PORTLAND, OR 97201.

Preston Benfield has a problem with Raines Video Production...

and I quote from his letter, “On 9 June 1998 I sent a check in the amount of \$31.95 for a video of the 48th Bomb Sqad. Reunion to Raines Video Productions. The check has cleared the bank but we have not received the video, for some reason. I did not keep the address. If you or someone has the address I would appreciate it if you would send it to me.

Thanks.” If anyone has any thoughts on this, please contact Preston, 7026 Fairmont Dr., COLUMBIA, SC 29209 (803) 776-8817.



Two head guys talk thinks over in San Antonio... George Tolbert 47th at left and John Helmer

Shot Down, Rescued to Playing Second Base in 24 Hours Story of 47th Pilot Marvin Watts and His Crew



Back row left to right, Pilot Marvin Watts, co-pilot Clayton Klassy, Navigator-Bombardier John Olsa, and Crew Chief Ben Grobe. Front row, Engineer-gunner James L. Jones, Tail Gunner Gerald D. Quarles, and Radio Operator-Gunner George Dormuth

(Editor's note: I have talked this story over with Marv Watts, and he is not sure just how he got this story. Marv says that this Corporal Beckett interviewed all six of them, and that the story is essentially accurate, however he wishes that he would have told the story of their pre-planning..." All six of the crew were in a fox hole on Tarawa one night, when Lt. Olsa came up with a fifth of booze. They were shooting the breeze while they were finishing off the whiskey and the subject came up of what they would do if they were shot down. They actually discussed each one's participation in great detail. When their emergency occurred, they followed all of these plans exactly. They brain stormed factors like 1) get down fast because of fire, 2) look out for sharks, and 3) try not to bail out because if they stayed together and could get into the raft it would enhance everyone's survival." We assume that Beckett wrote this story for release to the media and sent Marv a courtesy copy. We have tried to copy this story just as it was written, retyping from about sixty year old onion skin copies... we've even let most of the misspellings and other errors of format stand... thinking that it is more fun to actually experience how things were written then)

Cpl John Becket
Hq 41st Bomb Group (M),
APO 459, 2 July 1944.

LT. WATTS & CREW.

Playing second base on a soft ball team less that 24 hours after being saved from a crash landing near an enemy island is taking the war magnificently in your stride. Which is exactly the way it is taken by Lt. Marvin B. Watts of 632 16th St., Richmond, Calif.

The soft ball game climaxed what proved to be the busiest twenty-four hours in their experience for Lt Watts and his crew of seasoned fliers. Lt Clayton E. Klassy of 1224 Cascade Ave., Chabalis, Washington, co-piloted with Lt Watts, and the navigator is Lt John C. Olsa, 4843 School St., Chigago, Ill. Engineer Gunner, S/Sgt James I. Jones, Taft, Tenn; Radio Operator George N. Dormuth of 1643 W. Lehigh Ave., Philadelphia, Penna; and S/Sgt Gerald D. Quarles, 11030 S. Linden St., Lynwood, Calif. complete the crew.

Also something of a record is the speed with which the men were rescued. Twenty-five minutes after they were hit over the enemy target, Nauru, they were all safely aboard the PBY which picked them up, headed for Tarawa and the security of emergency treatment. This was the first rescue mission of the PBY's pilot, Lt JG Aloh Holm of 5710 Waverly Ave., La Jolla, Calif., and one for which he and his crew may well be proud.

The plane, "The Ole Woman," now lies at the bottom of the sea near Nauru. But in her day she served faithfully. It was her fifty-first mission, and the forty-third in which this particular crew had taken her over enemy atolls and islands.

Lt Watts had piloted "The Old Woman" all through the Marshalls campaign on both low and high altitude missions. She had 72 holes and patches in her carcass, each one a familiar tally to her intrepid crew who had shared with her the impact of the enemy's fire. They hated to see her disappear below the surface of the water. Plane and crew had served each other well.

The crash landing occurred on the 27 June 1944, 15 seconds after bombs had been laid over Nauru. It took three heavy bursts of AA to bring "The Ole Woman" to her knees. The first burst hit the plane over the target, ripping the left wing and the left nacelle. Ack ack sprayed the pilot's compartment, the navigator's compartment and the tail.

The second burst got the right wing and right nacelle and more through the bomb bay tank and the rear fuselage. Some of the ack ack from this burst glanced off Lt. Classy's shoulder and grazed his flack vest and helmet. Miraculously, none of the men were injured by enemy bullets, although Lt Klassy has pieces of the deadly metal to show what a near miss was experienced by them all.

As Lt Watts was starting evasive action leaving the target, the right propeller began to run away. Still over the island and in the midst of AA bursts, he feathered the right propeller. A matter of seconds later the left engine quit. He tried to feather it, but it would not feather. Trying to regain some power with which to make a crash landing, the pilot then unfeathered the right engine, but again it immediately ran away and for the second time refused to feather. Fearing fire from gasoline which seemed to be everywhere, he cut all switches, put the plane into a dive to maintain speed for control, and called to the crew to stand by for ditching. Keeping an indicated air speed of 160 miles per hour and losing 3500 ft of altitude per minute, Lt Watts glided the plane down from 7000 feet to her last landing, about twenty miles away from the target.

"The Ole Woman" was in a flight of four planes and the other three craft stood by and circled while the men left her and climbed aboard the inflated raft. All men got out under their own power, though Quarles leg was broken in the crash and Dormuth received a fractured ankle. Quarles' leg made it impossible for him to swim, but in spite of his own ankle injury, Dormuth kept him afloat, swimming with him around the raft, which had hit the water upside down, until it could be righted.

Dormuth kept moving because there were several sharks in the vicinity which his sharp eyes had noted. None of the others in his crew had seen the sharks, but fortunately the crew of the PBY had spotted

them and kept up a continual fire with their submachine guns until the deadly sea beasts disappeared.

The PBY had been standing by and landed on the water immediately after the crash, heading towards the raft as soon as all men were aboard. The others lay Quarles out in the bottom of the raft, and Lt Klassy gave him a morphine syrette.

The whole adventure happened with such kaleidoscopic swiftness that there was no time for fear—only a great thankfulness for the flying boat's being so near and the rescue being effected so soon.

While on the way to Tarawa, the rescued crew were given hot coffee and the injured taken care of by the pharmacist chief who was aboard.

The PBY landed at Betio (this is as close as he editor can make it out?). Quarles and Dormuth immediately were put aboard another plane and flown to nearby Ella (Editor's note; we assume he means Ellice Islands here) island where they were taken to the hospital. Jones was given first aid treatment at the Basic dispensary while Lt Watts, Klassy and Olsa were lent dry clothes and shoes, and were given a couple of shots of bourbon (for medical purposes, of course) in the quarters of the Naval Officers.

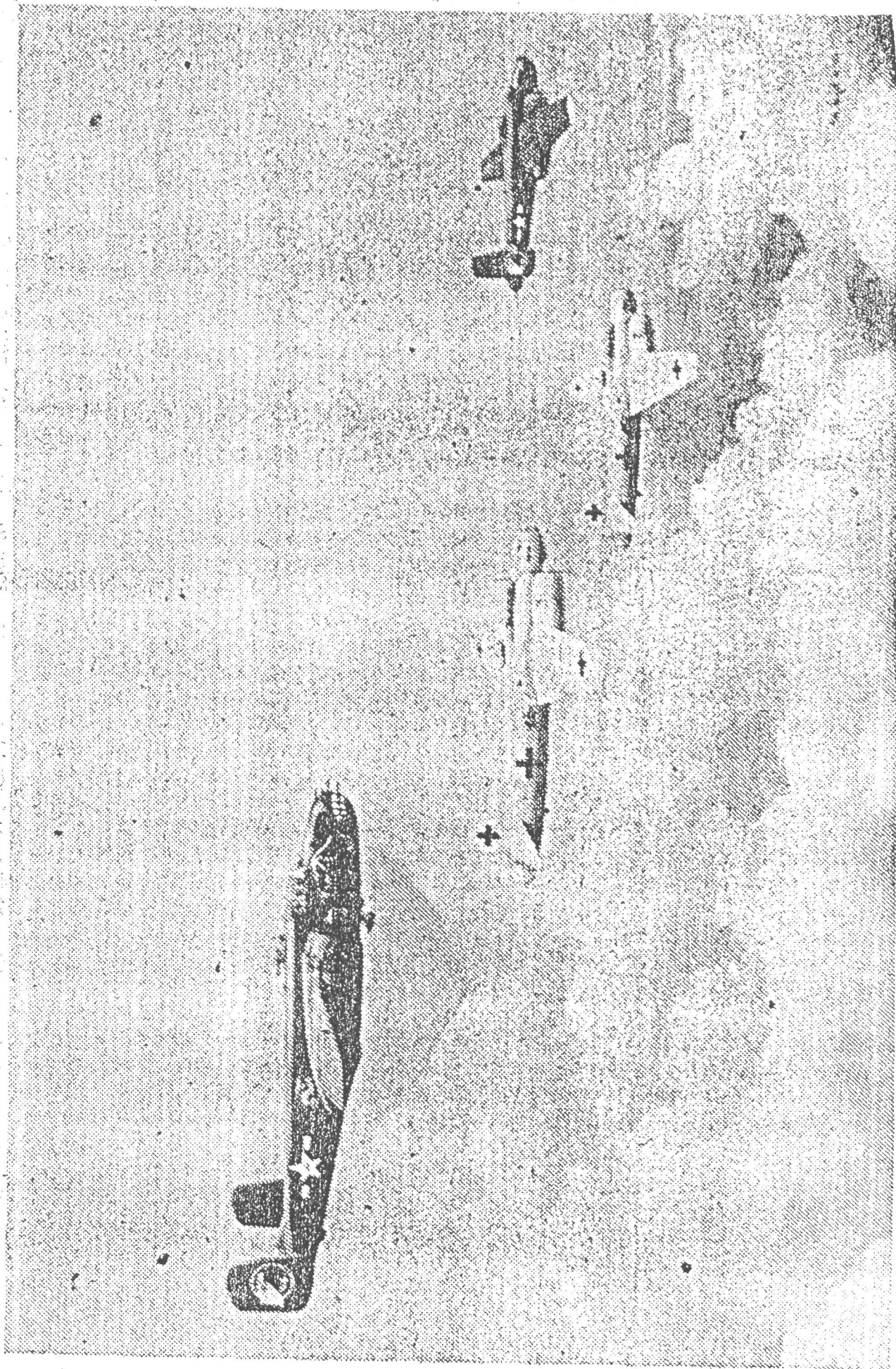
The next morning Lts Watts, Klassy and Olsa and Sgt Jones were flown back to Makin. Lt Watts changed clothes and made it to the soft ball diamond in time for the game which was a much previously discussed battle between his squadron and Group headquarters. The Lieutenant says he would now rather not discuss the final score.

Quarles is to be evacuated to a Honolulu hospital, and Dormuth has been transferred to the hospital on Makin. All men able to stand formation received awards in the ceremony presided over by Brigadier General Truman Landon, 30 June 1944. Dormuth received his in a special ceremony at the hospital on the same day. The next day Capt N. S. Woods, squadron commander, and Lt Watts flew to Tarawa where they presented Quarles with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal and the DFC with One Oak Leaf Cluster. All the men previously had been decorated, having five zeros to their credit as well as their many missions.

The awards are as follows: Lt Watts, Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, DFC with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple Heart with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster; Lt Klassy, Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, DFC with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, Purple heart with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster; Lt Olsa, Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, DFC with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple heart with 1 oak leaf Cluster; Sgt Jones, Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, DFC with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple Heart with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster; Sgt Dormuth, Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, DFC with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple Heart; Sgt Quarles, Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, DFC with 1 Oak leaf Cluster, and Purple Heart.

This is not the first crash landing this crew has experienced together. Once before they came down at their home base, Apamama, when again the excellent maneuvering of the pilot and the cooperation of the crew saw them safely through. They will fly together again, though not with "The Ole Woman." Perhaps the "new woman" will bring them less perilous experiences!

o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-



Michael Hagel's limited edition print of the historic mission escorting Japanese surrender emissaries to IE Shima by two B-25s is available from the Kalamazoo Air Zoo.

“VIGNETTES OF THE OLD CROW”

Long, long ago on a little island far, far away, a happy people lived. Their island in the Western Pacific, 35 miles south of the equator, they called, “Nauru” (pronounced “NOW-roo”) had everything this Melanessian people needed: coconut trees for food and drink, magnificent tomano trees for shade and fiber, abundant bird life and an ocean full of fish.

Two hundred years ago an English whaling captain discovered Nauru, claimed it in the name of the King and Anglicise it's name to “Pleasant Island.” Another century passed before a piece of petrified wood, carried off from Nauru to Australia as a souvenir, caught the eye of a chemist there. He examined it and declared it to be “quite valuable.” An expedition from Sidney was mounted to Nauru. Sure enough, the natives were living on one of the richest piles of phosphate on the globe. Millions of tons of the phosphate, the highest grade ever found, were processed and shipped to Australia and New Zealand to fertilize fields and farms.

Shortly after the infamous December 7, 1941 entrance of Japan into World War II, a Japanese cruiser, being severely damaged, made the land-fall, capturing this equatorial paradise of a little over 8 square miles, and fortified it with the armament of the cruiser. It became a thorn in the side of the American and British forces alike.

The Old Crow and sister squadrons of the 41st Group, as well as, and in conjunction with the B-24's, made many “neutralizing” raids on this small domain. As most Old Crows can readily recall, it remained a well-armed “tough nut” until the last, having some of the “best” flack gunners encountered in the entire war.

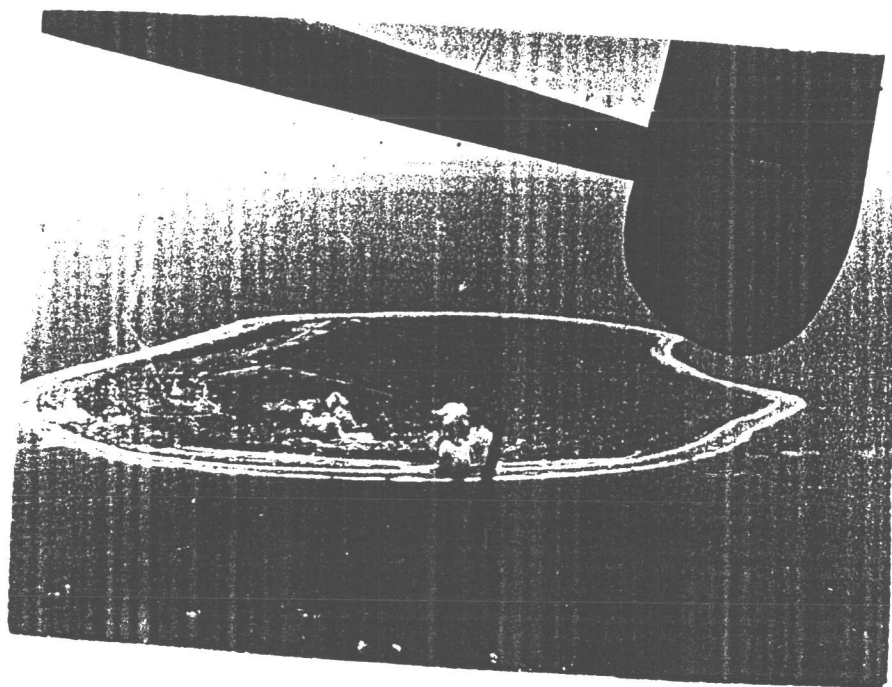
Following the Japanese surrender, the British domain was re-established and the phosphate industry slowly rebuilt. In 1968, the island declared and was given it's independence from the “Crown of England” by the United Nations. It became one of the smallest republics in the world.

Following the island's independence in 1968, the phosphate mines were “nationalized”, and the citizens of this “smallest republic” joined the ranks of the “wealthiest” by the sale of their homeland literally “ton by ton” down even below the waterline of the ocean.

Today, however, these once self-sufficient people are caught up in a Grimm Fairy Tale. The phosphate is almost gone and most of the money too. The heart is dug out of four-fifths of the island and nine-tenths of these people, who suffered the cruelty of Japan, bombing and strafing of the Old Crows and the stress of wealth. The current president of this small republic, Kinza Clodumar, born during the conflict, has observed: “what was once a tropical paradise was changed to a jagged, uninhabitable desert of coral tombstones. Our sad history serves as a poignant example for the rest of the world when humans disregard the good earth that sustains us.”

The Old Crow now, with a memory that has faded with time, observes that this 8 square miles of paradise which survived the Japanese Imperial occupation and which the Old Crow couldn't destroy, has consumed itself in a half-century as memories of fear, flack and the pounding by the Old Crow has faded under time.

(See Reader's Digest, May, 1997).



This little vignette was written by Maurice E. "Smitty" Smith for Marvin Watts. He also submitted the picture on the prior page showing, "Michael Hagel's limited edition print of the historic mission escorting Japanese surrender emissaries to IESHIMA by two B-25's is available from the Kalamazoo Air Zoo." He says that there were actually four B-25's in the escort and that he actually took this picture. He was the photo officer flying in the plane that the 47th sent. Smitty doesn't remember for sure just what squadrons the other three B-25's were from, but he's pretty sure that one of two of them were from a different group, i.e. not the 41st.

'One of Our Planes Failed to Return..'

By PVT. BUD NELSON, Bayshore, Long Island
7th Army Air Force Correspondent
Distributed By The Associated Press

WITH THE 7TH ARMY AIR FORCE IN THE CENTRAL PACIFIC—"One of our planes failed to return."

Yesterday I learned something of the meaning that lies in those words which seem so cold in communiques.

Our squadron of Mitchell bombers headed for Maleolap, a Japanese-held atoll in the Marshall Islands. Our targets were to be installations, buildings and shipping.

When our squadron commander briefed us in the Nissen hut, he said, "The target is rough; you know how rough."

The squadron knew how rough it would be. The men had been over this target before. But they joked about it, and among the jesters were the men of the plane that "failed to return."

It was a long over-water hop. I rode in the lead plane with Lt. Lucian A. Gray of Nespelem, Wash., Pilot and flight commander.

As we neared the Japanese base, the crew took battle stations. Seven Mitchells were flying abreast, like a forward wall of a football team.

We were so low that the propeller of one plane was bent and the undercarriage of his left motor was twisted out of shape by a wave.

We rose to about 150 feet, got a head on the shore line, and announced our approach with 15 MM cannon shells pouring onto the beach. Each time the cannon fired, the plane kicked, then forged ahead. Lower and still lower we came, our machine guns now opening on Jap installations.

The Japs retaliated with ack ack, automatic weapons and coast defense guns.

Abreast, we hit the island, skimming treetops at a speed that would more than cover a football gridiron every second. Enemy fighter planes darted out of low-hanging clouds and the gunners poured incendiaries, tracer and machinegun bullets toward them.

"Then a protecting group of fighters dipped down and the Japs beat it. All but one of us, still in formation, droned our way back home."

But the missing Mitchell: how about that plane?

He was on our right flank. He dipped with us, rose with us, headed the target with us then Jap anti-aircraft got his range.

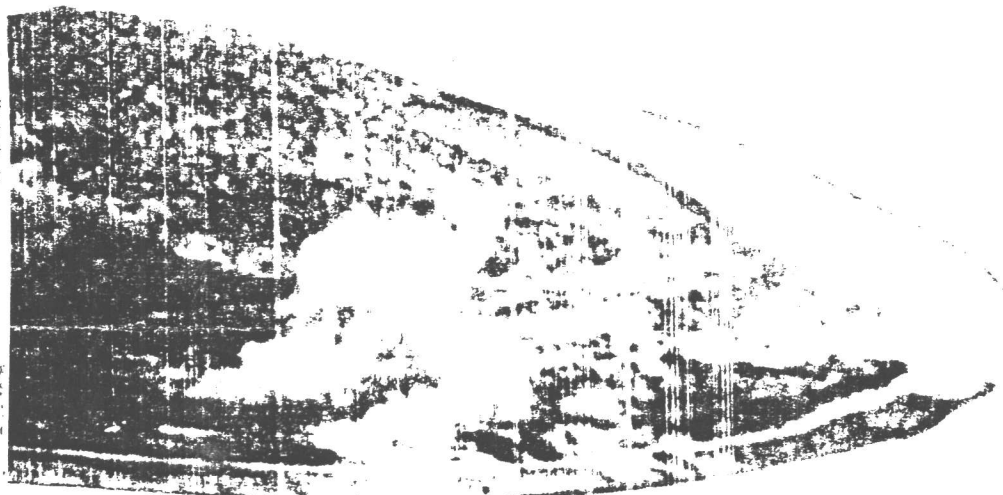
His motors were hit, his wings were severed. He burst into flames before he'd pulled his own bombs

doors open; before he could drop his bombs.

He crashed into Maleolap, a burning mass, four 500-pound bombs in his racks. There was a terrific blast.

"One of our planes failed to return," the communique said.

(Editor's note: This article was sent to us by Carl Gray, son of Lucian Gray, 47th pilot. Thank you very much, Carl. You mention that you could supply us with more clippings and photos from your father's collection. We will look forward to that.





Butaritari, Makin, Marshall Islands, Jan. 1944, Eldon Ray Ford, Radio Operator-Gunner... E.R.'s crew included Pilot Dick Ramstack, Co-pilot Horace Fantasia, Navigator-Bombarder Dean Heiser, Tail-gunner Hugh Cosgrove, and Engineer-Gunner Aaron Martin

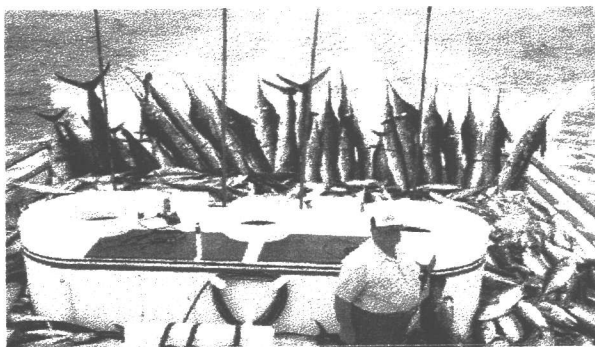


Notation on back of picture.. "7-'89 144 lb. "Big Eye" Tuna. These can 'knock your socks off.'"



Age 23.... first day of honorable discharge... 20 Jan 1946

ELDON RAY FORD (E.R.) PROFILE! RADIO OPERATOR-GUNNER 47TH BOMB SQUADRON 41ST BOMB GROUP 7TH AIR FORCE, WORLD WAR II SEE OVER LEAF



E.R.'s note on the back of this snap... "I had many trips like this from 1968 to 1990 when my knees gave out. This is the end of a 10-day trip when fish are removed from hold prior to returning to San Diego Long Range Fishing Dock." Another quote from his letter, "I had many exciting experiences on fishing trips lasting up to 19 days. We would leave from San Diego and go as far as 320 miles southwest of Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. These experiences included being shipwrecked on an uninhabited island (Guadalupe), 150 miles off the coast of Mexico."



Note on back of snapshot, "KATSUMI MORITA'S HOUSE ... O gote-chi so (MANY GOOD THINGS)... and more from his letter, "The Japanese man has been my gardener for 27 years. He was a teenage boy living in KUMAMOTO, KYUSHU when the 47th attacked it at "low level" on "Aug 10 1945-mission number 41-45. I can still see" the horse-drawn wagons going in all directions!"

Profile of

ELDON RAY FORD (E.R.)

Eldon started his military career by enlisting in San Bernardino, CA. He also had his basic training there. It was not a typical installation at all. His Captain was **dating Dorothy Lamour** and was gone much of the time... so it was sort of a fun deal. From there he went to Sioux Falls, SD for radio operator training. He said that he had only his khakis on when he left San Bernardino and when they arrived in Sioux Falls, it was 40 degrees below zero. And then it was on to Kingman, AZ for gunnery training... **and then on to Greenville, SC where they crewed up and actually started flying training missions in B-25's.** Eldon was in a group of 17 crews, and they then went to Eglin Field, FL for torpedo training. The 17 crews then departed for Hunter Field, Savannah, GA, **where they picked up new B-25's and proceeded to Kohuku, HA.** They were then sent to **Bellows Field, HA** for a long extensive training program. Then to Makin where they experienced their first combat. They then came back to Wheeler Field, HA for more training on torpedoes and the LORAN navigation system and the GBA (Glide Bombing Attachment) for the Norden bombsight. The next stop was Okinawa, where they learned a bit more about combat flying. A funny story here when they flew their B-25 out of Okinawa to get away from the typhoon. Short of the destination in the Phillippines, **they blew a stack** and were forced to land at a very small runway with a steel lattice runway. They had to hike away to get to the nearest AACS (Army Airways Communications System) where they wired in, **"BLEW STACK, SEND STACK, RAMSTACK."** (Dick Ramstack was his pilot) A C-47 landed with their stack and immediately took off, and they had not the slightest know-how or tools to install the stack. They struggled with it for a couple days, took off and within a few minutes blew the new stack. They went back to their little runway, and wired again, **"RECEIVED STACK, REPLACED STACK, BLEW STACK, SEND STACK, RAMSTACK."** This time the C-47 brought a mechanic with the proper tools who had the thing installed in about a half hour and they were able to get back to Okinawa. He left Okinawa for a long boat ride home and eventual discharge at Ft. MacArthur, CA.

Eldon and Norma were married for 50 years from Oct. 19, 1947 to March 6, 1998, when Norma passed away. Their two children Constance and Stephen both graduated from UC Santa Barbara, and his oldest grandchild is just graduating from the same school. Constance is now a high school teacher, and Stephen a Mortgage Broker. They had six grand-children in all.

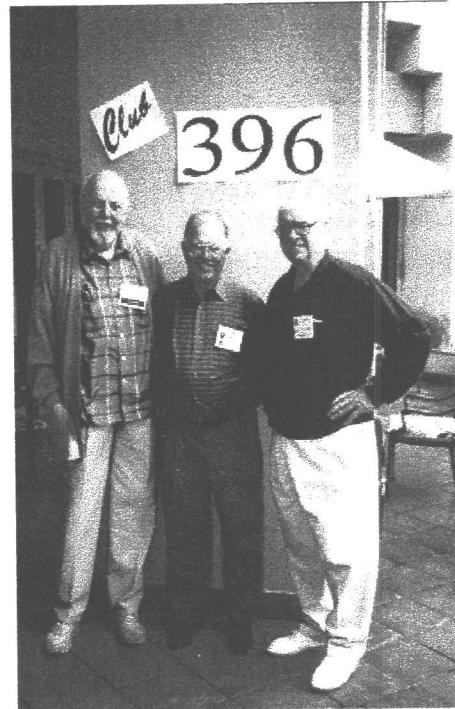
Eldon worked for Sears as a Credit Central Manager for 35 years, retiring in 1980. They traveled around a lot living in seven cities. They did a lot of other traveling over the years and in between Eldon would enjoy his passion of Long Range Deep Sea Fishing, and Norma hers of bridge, being a Life Master.

The Inevitable Triumvirate—53 years and counting ...sort of inseparable thru a dozen stations and 2-plus years

The Hollander from Michigan, the Tycoon from Brooklyn and the Bohemian from Kansas
Left to right both pictures, Jess (Ray) Ramaker (48th), Dick Sternberg (396th) and Kem Sitterley (47th)

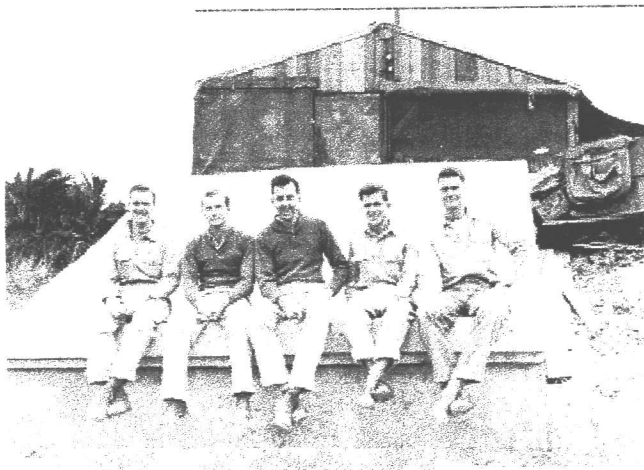


396th Officers Club, Machinato
Airfield, Okinawa, 1945



Radisson Hotel, San
Antonio, Texas, 1998

It just seemed inevitable that every set of orders that came out, all three were assigned to the same destination and organization.



L to R— Sitterley, Tom Wetherbee (48th
deceased), Ramaker, Sternberg, and Jim Dunkel
(396th) on top of an Okinawa tomb roof



L to R – Tom Wetherbee (48th
deceased), Sternberg, Ramaker,
and Sitterley

Reunion Planning Committee

- 41st **Murray A. Bywater**, 11390 Coleman St., Moreno Valley, CA 92388 (909) 247-7037, fax (909) 242-2866
- 47th **Dorothy and Don Haskell**, 1510 S. Peppertree Court, Visalia, CA 93277- 8606 (209)732-1553, e-mail dhaskell@mindinfo.com
- Kemary Crowder**, 8862 Shaula Way, San Diego, CA 92126 (619) 271-1844, e-mail kcrowder@aol.com
- Kallie Sitterley**, 125 S. Brighton St., Burbank, CA 91506 (818) 972-9257 e-mail bjkid88@aol.com (beetle juice if you're wondering)
- Polly and Kem Sitterley**, 20449 Blue Mountain Dr., Walnut, CA 91789-1001 (626) 965-2129, fax (909) 595-4451 (call first... gotta press a button) e-mail ksitterley@linkline.com
- 48th **Esther and Felix Galyean**, 1658 Oak Hill Dr., Escondido, CA 92027---- (760) 745-7062
- Dick Monzingo**, 7864 SVL Box, Victorville, CA 92392 (760) 245-4655
- Helen and Paul Hopson**, 6558 Merito Av., San Bernardino, CA 95819---- (909) 885-1106
- 396th **Walt Winner and Joyce Haddock**, 535 Spencer St., Glendale, CA 91212-1513 (818) 242-1488
- LaVerne and Keith Ingstad**, 401 El Crezo Road #150, Palm Springs, CA 92262 ---- (760) 322-4782
- 820th **Skip Thrune**, 1330 W. Domingo Road, Fullerton, CA 92833-1925 ----(714) 526-4042 ... Skip has not been able to make a meeting yet... on both occasions he had out-of-town appointments he couldn't change
- Marriott Hotel**, Quentin Roberts, 2200 W. Holt Blvd., ONTARIO, CA 91761, (909) 975-5000, FAX (909) 975-5050
- Custom Leisure Services** Carolyn J. Schoenwetter, 2500 San Antonio Crescent East, UPLAND, CA 91784, (909) 985-8282, FAX (909) 982-2153

Committee Chairs

Money Manager	Walt Winner
Audio-Visual	Paul Hopson
Tours	Keith Ingstad
Internet	Don Haskell