

5 January 1945

318TH FIGHTER GROUP MISSION REPORT # 1-20 (Consolidated)
P-38 PROVISIONAL SQUADRON MISSION REPORT # 1-3

1. A. Nine (9) P-38L's (One, (1) did not reach target)
B. One (1) single-engine aircraft (probably a ZEKE).
2. A. One (1) P-38L
B. One (1) single-engine aircraft (probably a ZEKE) destroyed, confirmed.
3. Low-level strafing attack on Iwo Jima.
4. Lts. AMON, HEAGNEY, STEVENS, M BENNETT. (Violet 31)
Lts. SPENCER, SHENEMAN, ERBELE, SULLIVAN. (Violet 32)
Lt. BESCHE. (Spare)

Takeoff: 0342 - Over Target: 0730 - Landed: 1115.

The P-38's rendezvoused with the 3 B-24's (navigating escort) over East Field at 0350 and proceeded on course to Iwo Jima, climbing to 9,000 feet. Inasmuch as none of the planes in Violet 31 or Violet 32 ran into mechanical difficulty, Lt. BESCHE left the flight at Pagan and returned to base, pancaking at 0556. The remaining 8 P-38's continued on course, dropping to the deck approximately 100 miles from Iwo Jima. As they approached the target area, the following action took place:

Just prior to pulling up for approach to the target, the right engine of Violet 32-2 quit and the plane went into the ocean approximately 25 miles east of Iwo Jima. Violet 32-1 immediately turned back and circled the spot where Violet 32-2 crashed. All that could be observed was an oil slick and one oxygen container. Violet 31-1 experienced difficulty with an engine cutting out when he tried to increase power, so he also turned back and orbited with Violet 32-1.

Violet 31-2, 31-3 and 31-4 continued to the target. When one mile from the east coast of Iwo Jima, they spotted a bogie which had just taken off No. 2 Airfield, heading toward the south tip of the island, at 1,000 feet altitude. Violet 31-2 and 31-4 pulled up and went after the bogie. Violet 31-4 opened fire at maximum range and then both Violet 31-2 and 31-4 closed on the bogie as he circled to the left. Both P-38's again opened fire from about 800 feet and the bogie's left wing was set afire. The bogie went into a gradual diving turn and Violet 31-2 fired a final burst just as the bogie hit the water and exploded approximately 5 miles southwest of Iwo Jima. Violet 31-3 strafed revetment areas on the northeast tip of Airfield # 1. He could see tracers going into the revetments but did not observe any parked aircraft.

Violet 32-3 and 32-4 made a strafing pass across Airfield No. 2. As soon as they reached the island, they ran into intense A/A. Violet 32-4 attacked an automatic weapons position just west of the taxiway and

318th Fighter Group Mission Report # 1-20 (Consolidated) -- Continued

4. CONT'D

observed his tracers pouring into the area where gun flashes were most intense. Violet 32-3 was badly shot up almost as soon as he reached the island. As he came off the island, his right wing was in flames and the spinner of his left engine had been shot off. Violet 32-4 joined him after the strafing pass and both planes headed for Minami Rock. After a minute or so, the fire on Violet 32-3's right wing went out and a large hole (approximately 12 inches in diameter) was observed near the trailing edge of the wing. His left engine was out and his canopy gone. Both planes rendezvoused with the other 5 P-38's and the B-24's and headed for home. Two of the B-24's stayed with Violet 32-3 and 32-4. (Violet 32-3 was unable to feather his right propeller). The remaining 5 P-38's went ahead with the third B-24 and pancaked at 1115. Violet 32-4, who had received instructions from his flight leader at 0915 to return with one of the B-24's, pancaked at 1126. Violet 32-3 came all the way home on one engine, his plane badly shot up, and pancaked at Isely Field at 1210.

A/A was intense, inaccurate to accurate, from positions all around No. 2 Airfield and from positions near the volcano at the south tip of the island. The fire was from automatic weapons and machine guns.

5. A. Good enroute, over target and return. Clouds, .2 to .4 cumulus 2,000 to 12,000 feet.
B. Loud and clear.
6. The automatic weapons position just west of the northwest taxiway was severely damaged.
7. 1,550 rounds .50 cal. 209 rounds 20mm. 5,400 gallons gas.
8. Oil drums on beach were strafed. No positive results seen or observations made as to their contents.

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318TH FIGHTER GROUP, AAF
A.P.O. # 244

INDIVIDUAL PILOT NARRATIVE REPORTS
(318th Group Mission # 1-20, 5 Jan)

2nd Lt. HORACE D. BENNETT, Violet 31-4.

When coming off the target at Iwo at 0800, January 5, 1945, I, Lt. Bennett, started closing on a Jap single engine aircraft in a slight turn to the left. He was approximately 1500 feet high. I began firing from about 2,000 feet. My air-speed was 260 to 270 miles per hour. I held continuous fire until the left wing was tank exploded and then ceased firing. I expended 650 rounds of caliber .50 and 137 rounds of 20MM. The range was about 1,000 feet at that time and the Jap was 300 feet high. There was a large fire as he went into the water about 4 to 5 miles south-west of Iwo. Lt. Heagney was closing on my left wing at the same time as I was firing.

/s/ Horace D. Bennett
/t/ HORACE D. BENNETT
2nd Lt., Air Corps,
O-760233

2nd Lt. GERALD J. HEAGNEY, Violet 31-2.

Bogey was called out immediately after he had taken off. As we pulled up to make the strafing run I saw the Bogey coming in at 180 degrees to our course and a little to the left of my line of flight. Jap turned to the right as Lt. Bennett and I started chasing him. Lt. Bennett fired first out of range and Jap soon reversed his turn to the left with Bennett still firing. Seeing that Lt. Bennett wasn't closing on him, I cut inside Bennett's turn and started firing. Saw my 20MM hitting his left wing and seconds later he burst into flame on the left side and started down. I quit firing then but he didn't seem to be losing altitude very fast so I started firing again and continued until he hit the water and exploded.

/s/ Gerald J. Heagney
/t/ GERALD J. HEAGNEY
2nd Lt., Air Corps,
O-763815

A TRUE COPY:

William P. Freligh
WILLIAM P. FRELIGH
1st Lt., Air Corps

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