



SUNSETTER'S GAZETTE

Newsletter of the
Seventh Fighter Command Association
USAAF-World War II



NEWSLETTER

January 2004

VOLUME XXII NUMBER 1

7th Fighter Command Reunion

July 3-5, 2002 Seattle, WA



A total of 64 veterans, friends, and family reconnected at 7th Fighter Command reunion held this summer in Seattle, at the Museum of Flight. During the 3 days, members had the opportunity to tour the Boeing F/A-22 Raptor wing factory as well as "fly" the Raptor flight simulator. All enjoyed a BBQ Lunch and Dinner on the 4th of July at our hotel (the Larkspur Landing) in Renton. Saturday morning we all shuttled over to the Museum for tours, a box lunch and a special presentation in the Museums theater by 4 of our members, **Paul Chism** (78th), **Walt Kreiman** (78th), **Jim Tapp** (78th) and **Jim VanNada** (72nd) and MC'd by yours truly.



Paul Chism, Jim VanNada, Pinky Rodgers and a grateful B-29 Commander meet at the museum

The topic of discussion ranged from Jim VanNada's harrowing experience during the Banzai attack on Iwo Jima, Jim Tapp's recollection of the first combat over the empire, Paul Chism's ordeal of ditching his Mustang and his subsequent capture by the Japanese, and Walt Keiman's close call in having to bail out of his burning plane and rescue by submarine.

That evening was capped by a dinner in the Museum's banquet hall and featured speakers **Harry Thompson** (45th) and **Ken Taylor** (47th).

Videos of the theater presentation and dinner speakers will be available soon and ordering information will be in the next newsletter.

Plans are already being drawn up for next year's reunion, which will be in October in Dayton Ohio. It is hoped that we can make this an annual event which will rotate around the country so that all of our members who are able to, can attend.

New officers were elected as follows:

President - Frank Rodgers
V.P. 15th Fighter Group – Jim Tapp
V.P. 21st Fighter Group – Bill Bradbury
V.P. 318th Fighter Group – Frank Rodgers (acting)
V.P. 414th Fighter Group – Pending
V.P. 506th Fighter Group – John Benbow
V.P. Night Fighters Group – Bill Sill
Treasurer – Jim Van Nada
Adjunct General – Harve Phipps
Secretary / Historian – Mark Stevens

It was decided to break out the Vice Presidents position into the major Fighter Groups in the attempt to create more unity in the association.

MEMORIES

The 333rd Fighter Squadron's Last Months

Remarks by **Jack Rasmussen**, former Squadron CO



Jack Rasmussen in his P-47N

The Beginning of the End

I think the place to start is at the end, that being the 333rd's last combat mission of WWII. Although I've called it the "last" mission I must stress we did not take off KNOWING it was the last one or even supposing it was. The date was 14 August, 1945, and it was a high-altitude

fighter sweep all the way to Tokyo -1,000 miles up and 1,000 miles back. It was not an especially eventful effort. Several minutes before 12 noon and in sight of Mount Fuji, Capt. **Douglas Currey**, who was leading the squadron that day, shot down an enemy aircraft. That proved to be the last confirmed fighter kill of all, repeat ALL of WWII. And it went to the 333rd Fighter Squadron.

Just about noon -note the time; noon - we were skirting Osaka at 28,000 feet and taking heavy caliber flak. We landed back at Ie Shima about 2:15 in the afternoon, completing the longest single-engine mission of squadron strength of the war. I personally logged 8:20 and give or take ten minutes, that was about everybody's time.

It was only after we landed we learned the war was over. It had ended at 12 noon exactly by the terms of the Japanese surrender. Nobody had thought to call the news to us in the air so we were possibly the last on the island to know.

Reactions to the news.

After turning in my P-47 to its owner, its crew chief, I went through my customary private ritual: patted a prop blade while mentally saluting Pratt and Whitney, and breathed my usual thanks to our dedicated and highly-professional flight line crews. Then I began to grasp the news. What most of us pilots felt at that moment was, I think, a great rush of relief: "Thank God, no more of those hairy, overloaded takeoffs!" And next to marvel that we'd MADE it, survived! A rush of reprieve.

Within a couple of days we celebrated with an "Iron Claw" party, something of an institution with the 333rd. Now this "Iron Claw" was an artificial substitute for the liquor rations we never got, unlike the guys in the E.T.O. It was a deceptively mild beverage, sort of like a low-grade "Sprite", except it was booby-trapped. Iron Claw was invented by our flight surgeon, **Dr. Van Valkenberg**, in cahoots with two of his pilot cronies. They concocted it out of God-knows-what ingredients --and declined to reveal their recipe. They made up a jeezly great batch of Iron Claw, filling completely our punch bowl, a clear plastic nose bubble off a wrecked B-17.

We ladled it up by the aluminum canteen - cups full and gulped it down thirstily. And incautiously. We lighted up in no time at all and the toasting began. We toasted victory first, then our good fortune that we'd survived. We toasted the 333rd Fighter Squadron and our rugged Jugs, and heartiest of all our proficient, patient and forgiving ground crews. And after that we toasted anything and anybody else who could be remembered. Next somebody started the singing - all the Vampire Squadron's repertoire of such raunchy songs as "I wanted wings till I got the goddamned things, now I don't want them any more," and the others of like sort, their words too indelicate for tender ears. By this time we were exuding warmth and good will for all mankind. Also about this time we began dropping in our tracks in ones and twos like burnt-out Roman candles - out cold. Probably just what Dr. Van had intended. That was Iron Claw.

Weariness catches up

In the several days after VJ Day things seemed a bit unreal. Nerves that had been screwed down pretty tight

now went slack. Nobody had realized how much nervous energy we had spent. Flying was suspended so we slept a lot. There was little in the way of jubilation, more of a sense of reprieve. We were also uneasy about whether this surrender was for real. It was so much out of character for the Japanese.



Brief Magazine via Bob Johnson

On 19 August the Japanese surrender delegates landed at Ie Shima in a pair of all-white Mitsubishi bombers, Betty's. The 333rd was miffed P-47s had been passed over for providing escort for the Emperor's representatives. After all, our 318th was the senior fighter group in the area. Instead, a pair of B-25 medium bombers got the call. Perhaps it was feared we were not to be trusted to bring the Japanese in safely. And in truth we did NOT like those people.

Thousands lined the runway to watch them land, very much aware we were witnessing an historic event. Seeing real, live Japanese on our ground lent conviction that the surrender was real after all. The surrender-signing ceremony on the MISSOURI up in Tokyo Bay September second spelled finality. It was over for us, for everybody. The 333rd's wartime duty was truly finished.

Unwinding

Now the unwinding began. It's not my intention to spin out all the day-by-day, week-to-week squadron events in its five remaining months from mid-August to January. For one thing it's not a pretty story; a depressing one, rather, the disintegration of our organization. Those were five months of confusion, uncertainty and indecision. Recognizable administrative authority and firm direction of affairs faded steadily. We were left adrift in an ocean of endless rumors. The most disquieting of these was that the 318th Group was to be deactivated here and now.

Inactivity settles in

Some limited flying resumed but it was heavily restricted - not a thing we regretted. Squadron sections began to be closed down: armaments, photo, supply. Pilots, for their part, were left idle, largely. The old military adage "War is 95% boredom and 5% sheer terror" changed to 100% boredom.

Early on in September we began hearing about something called "Magic Carpet". This emerged as a scheme for the rapid mass-movement of troops home by every possible mode of transportation. From the States and from within the uniformed ranks was a ground swell sentiment to "Get the boys home," -and they meant RIGHT NOW! Next we heard about the "Point System" a procedure for implementing Magic Carpet. It was devised

to set up the order and precedence for scheduling the homeward bound. By its formula a point was counted for each month of service; another for each month overseas, extra points for married men and still more for those who had children; bonus points for the disabled and for awards and decorations. A man's total points determined the order in which he would get home.

The Exodus Begins

During combat operations pilots had been rotated out, however irregularly, but ground personnel had not. Most of them were pre-Pearl Harbor and Regular Army. Nearly all of them had been on continuous duty out on those islands for FOUR or more years, without relief. Familiar faces disappeared from the flight line about now as the exodus got under way. We believe the great bulk of our ground personnel were gone by the end of September. So we parted company and their story is different from the one I shall continue.

Nearly all Group and Squadron administrative types were also high point men and as they shipped out we stay-behind dumb head airplane drivers were saddled with administrative functions for which we were totally untrained and altogether unfit. These mal-assignments only accelerated the degeneration of squadron management. What had been a smoothly run unit began to fall apart in front of our eyes. In the absence of any clear and compelling PURPOSE, spirit began to decline.

Deactivation Becomes a Reality.

Even more disturbing was the official pronouncement that the 318th Group was de facto deactivated. The end of our familiar order and routine left us uneasy. Reality confronted us when they began taking our airplanes. The oldest of our Thunderbolts were to be scrapped forthwith. They were actually taxied under their own power to a sea cliff and sent crashing over onto the coral shelf 200 feet below, creating what we called the "ten million dollar junk pile." We couldn't believe it. Our meticulously maintained airplanes, in all respects fully operational yesterday, were today classified worthless; expendable and ordered for destruction. It did not sit well with us, never mind the policy decision that it was a simple matter of economic necessity. It wounded our sentiments and the waste was a shock.

Not all of them were destroyed. The newest of our replacement P-47s were earmarked for later delivery to certain Latin American countries and improbable as that sounded they actually were, we later learned.



Jack Rasmussen

In fact P-47s were occasionally mentioned in the news as still flying in places like Nicaragua, Guatemala and Peru up to the mid-1950s. In addition to the loss of airplanes, stores and equipment was drawn in and hauled off, by strangers. We began to feel abandoned.

Life in Quarters

Living conditions improved, but only marginally. Water rations were increased, fractionally. Some enterprising types organized a cold water drip-shower and we had our first fresh water bath in months. Food remained Spam and dehydrated vegetables. But somewhere on the island an army bakery was set up and an unsteady trickle of excellent army bread — our first ever on le Shima—came our way, though infrequently. Faceless scrounge artists fared somewhat better on their mysterious excursions among other shrinking end unwary outfits. We somehow came into possession of a pair of gas-driven generators to operate two windfall fridges and our very own 16mm movie projector. The methods by which these riches were acquired were never questioned.

Typhoon havoc

About the end of September and again in mid-October the Ryukyus were hit by two bloody great East China Sea typhoons. The second of these swept le Shima absolutely bare. A scant half-dozen Quonset huts were left standing but everything else was under canvas shelter and it was all blown away. Damage to equipment, aircraft and ships was extensive. Some types of airplanes were flipped onto their backs, but not P-47s. Litter covered the island. We were left a bedraggled bunch, quote "sad bastards" unquote, and no mistake. Our tents were down, our belongings sodden and worst of all we were without food. B-29s from the Mariana's airdropped loads of K-rations to us. For five days all we ate were K-rations — and only the breakfast units, at that. The storm finished off the last vestiges of the 333rd Squadron as an operational organization, though there was no formal announcement of the fact.

We all know it's an ill wind indeed that blows NO good. The typhoons actually brought two benefits. Somebody felt compassion and mounted a major food relief operation. It came to us in the form of a jeezly great turkey feed, with all the trimmings, just like the traditional Thanksgiving orgy. All you could eat; even some take aways. The turkey was our first meat NOT out of a can we had had on le Shima. Possibly even more welcome was the FRESH, CRISP celery. Dear God, I can still taste it!

The other benefit was quite more important and far-reaching: a decision that came down from Island Command. Most units had lost practically all of their records; all that paperwork. Without the records, accountability was impossible. Accordingly, EVERYTHING, all materiel was written off to storm loss, the same as battle loss. Since responsibility for materiel could not be substantiated everybody was off the hook. Just the same, none of this could obscure the fact that the 333rd Squadron was by now only a name.

Move to Okinawa

Demobilization was by now an avalanche. In early November we were moved across to Okinawa, in driblets. Once there we were allotted tent space in random order, mostly among army forces. We lost physical contact with each other and our association withered still more. Plying off Okinawa, such little as there was, got to be really G.I. Avgas was strictly rationed and with only skeleton

maintenance staffs flying time was tight. We no longer had our own yellow-nosed Thunderbolts with their yellow and black striped tail markings that identified the 318th Fighter Group. Now when we flew it was in borrowed airplanes whose people were stiffly proprietary.

About the end of November I led a 16 plane makeup squadron of a three-squadron composite fighter group on a show of force demonstration over Masuko Jima. We made two or three low-level, high-speed passes over Japanese garrison troops who were embarking on their transports. The idea was to send them home with a lasting impression of American air power.

My only purpose in mentioning this episode is because I believe this demonstration was the last programmed operation in which any 333rd Squadron personnel were engaged. Incidentally, it was also my last flight ever in a Thunderbolt. Other than this, on Okinawa we just vegetated, trying to keep our-selves occupied while we waited for our number to come up to go home. Ground forces people gave some appearance of purposeful-ness but we were altogether adrift; scattered clusters of unemployed, surplus fighter jocks, our usefulness ended.

Ave atque vale (Hail and Farewell)

About a week before Christmas - this would be December, 1945 - I was moved to an embarkation assembly area. In transient shelter there, I was joined by a major of engineers. Amidst his baggage was a wooden G.I. footlocker stenciled in yellow "333rd Fighter Squadron". I was dumbfounded. "Hey, what are YOU doing with THAT?" He grumbled that he'd been stuck with custody of it back to the States, and why did I ask? "Because that's MY OUTFIT."

I felt a stab of indignation at the ignominy of the 333rd being reduced to nothing more than a box of papers; our records, our orders, our history —all that heritage. I could accept the inevitability of the squadron's deactivation okay but I felt a flush of resentment over the process by which it had come to its end: BAD FORM! It had come about without grace or ceremony; without DIGNITY. Not a parade, no honorifics, not even an informal muster to pronounce the fact of deactivation, nor goodbye handshakes all around. And most unworthy of all: no words of remembrance of our dead. It was unseemly.

While these thoughts raced through my mind this officer of engineers was complaining: "What in hell am I doing, stuck with this thing?" ("Thing!") and, "It's your outfit. How come YOU'RE not in charge of it instead of me?" And damned if he didn't pull rank and cause my travel orders to be amended to name ME custodian of the footlocker. The next afternoon we were embarked on a navy escort carrier and sailed for Seattle - my hometown, by the way.

At the Seattle port of embarkation I sought to deliver over my piece of government property but they were not authorized to receive it. Four days later I was bused to Ft. Lewis for processing. There, Quartermaster Corps people signed a receipt for it and took the footlocker into their charge. The date was January sixth, 1946; the place was Fort Lewis, Washington. Then and there passed out of my sight and into oblivion the 333rd Fighter Squadron of the 318th Fighter Group of the 301st Fighter Wing of Seventh Fighter Command of the Seventh United States Army Air

Force.

As Walter Cronkite puts it: "... and that's the way it was."



333rd F-15E Seymour Johnson AFB - USAF

But some things DO change. We are gratified and proud of the 333rds resurrection. We can hand off [our heritage] knowing the 333rd Fighter Squadron is in the capable hands of those keen young professionals of our grandsons' generation. It is now for them to take up the story.

Women's Air Raid Defense (WARD)



Midway to the End of the War

By May 1942, the WARDe could see signs of preparations for the Battle of Midway in the intense air traffic, which frequently required extra shifts or no relief, and in the false air raid alarms caused by new pilots missing approach corridors. Later that month, Maj. Gen. Clarence L. Tinker, Hawaiian Air Force commander, and General Davidson briefed the assembled WARDe. "General Davidson said that, since there would be no assistance available to us during an attack, the WARDe would be required to stay on post and prepare with fire fighting equipment, practice litter-bearing and generally get ready for independent self-care." Nancy Hedemann recalled.

By June 4 the women knew the battle was on. "They asked us to stay put," shift captain Joy Shaw wrote, "and I gave no relief to the girls on the plotting board. As a matter of fact, they did not want to be relieved." Katie Huber recalled that they vectored "Air Force bombers-many with injured men aboard-into blacked-out airfields with voice direction through UHF radio. We received a citation for a job well done."

Nell Larsen remembered "When the news came in that we had won a great victory at Midway...the Air Force threw their hats in the air". Not too long after...WARDe were told that the handsome and very personable General Tinker had been lost...on a bomber attempting to attack Wake Island."

After Midway the Army decided to establish air defense operations centers on Maui, Kauai and Hawaii, where it had already located radars and where there also were fighter airfields. Although smaller than the Oahu ICC, the

new centers were no less labor intensive. The WARD organization was asked to staff these centers.

Recruiting was by word of mouth, as it had been on Oahu, but was more problematic on the neighbor islands. The Oahu WARDs had been drawn from Hawaii's 105,000 haoles (Caucasians), plus military wives. The Army had put the island's 160,000 Japanese-more than half the population-off-limits for sensitive jobs, even the 60 percent who were Hawaiian-born. The neighboring island populations were heavily Japanese, with few haoles. Recruiting from the close-knit communities, with unnumbered houses on unnamed streets, would have to follow personal recommendations from local teachers, physicians and clergymen.

Kauai, with the smallest population, presented the greatest challenge. Florence Rice was appointed head supervisor. Mrs. Rice and her three new supervisors quickly discovered that to fill a quota of about 50 girls without lowering standards, younger girls would have to be accepted. The Army had to hire a scholastic tutor and provide guards for the dormitory.

The island operations centers were located in main towns, so most WARDs could live at home. They could not reveal what they did or even where they worked, however, and had to be dropped off for work away from the centers. The Kauai WARDs spent two months at the Lihue Grammar School learning plotting, filtering and how to vector Barking Sands airfield's Curtiss P-40 fighters.



P-40B - Bellows Field _ Norv Heath

After Midway, the threat of another attack on Hawaii receded, everyone breathed easier. Social life picked up, and the WARDs found themselves in great demand for armed forces' parties and dances. However, Lizard was busier than ever coordinating the increasing air traffic headed for the western Pacific, air-sea rescue operations and interceptor pilot training. "As WARDs we get a tremendous satisfaction out of the role we play in rescue work. There isn't a WARD who hasn't been, at one time or another, partly responsible for saving the life of a young airman in distress" wrote Tanya Widren.

But by late 1942 many of the original WARDs were leaving. For Hedemann, when she married and became pregnant, she recalled, "They moved me out of the WARD with a rapidity that suggested I might have the plague." Lornahope DeClue felt that "the urgency of serving was over" and resigned to continue her education. Chief supervisor Mary Erdman resigned to accompany her evacuated daughter to the mainland. Dottie Beach resigned to pursue her flying and join the Women's Air Force Service Pilots. Joy Shaw left when her husband was

transferred to the mainland.

As the original WARDs were leaving, new radar stations were coming on line. "Every new station or job meant one more girl for each of the four shifts," wrote Bertha Bloomfield-Brown, and "it was not long before all recruiting efforts struck rock bottom in the islands, where the employment situation was critical anyhow." The age limit was officially lowered to 17 to qualify girls just graduating from High School; special shifts were arranged for some University of Hawaii students. By January 1943, the 7th Fighter Command reluctantly decided to recruit for the WARD on the mainland.

Recruiting started in San Francisco, where Colonel Lorry Tindal of the 7th Fighter Command had gone to see the Air Defense Wing's recruiting officer. Tanya Widren met Tindal through a friend while on her way to join the Women's Army Corps. She later said, "When Colonel Tindal told me that the WARDs operate a filter center and do the same type of work as the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in England...I was on my way within ten days." The Army still classified air defense top-secret, however, and later recruits experienced cloak-and-dagger meetings, loyalty tests and FBI background investigations. "As I shivered in the fog," wrote recent Stanford graduate Jean McKellar, "I thought about what I told young women in my recruiting work for the WARD; 'Hawaii is so beautiful, so warm; the work is vital to our security.'...Hawaii seemed to offer several solutions in one!"

The first 34 mainland recruits arrived in Honolulu in February 1943 aboard a crowded U.S. Navy transport after a stormy passage in a zigzagging convoy. With 143 women, plus four to eight replacements arriving each month, Hawaii's WARD had adequate strength for the first time. By early 1944, with the war distant from Hawaii, and Oahu's operations center able to cover the whole territory, the Army closed down the neighbor island centers-first the Kauai unit on January 15 and then Maui's and the Big Island's on April 1.

V-J Day seemed to arrive suddenly. Air Defense commander, Brig. Gen. John Weikert, notified the WARD, "It is expected that military personnel will take over all WARD duties within fifteen days after V-J Day and that the WARD as an organization will be completely disbanded within twenty days after V-J Day." The War Department offered the WARDs equivalent civil service positions in the islands. Of approximately 165 on duty, 87 elected to return to the mainland.

Responding to a May 1945 editorial in the Honolulu Advertiser praising the WARDs, General Howard Davidson, their first commander, wrote chief supervisor Kitty Coonley, "I have seen many fighter control [centers], have several under me now, but the one in Honolulu manned by the WARDs is the best I have seen...you can take great pride in the fact that...you maintained the best Air Raid Defense system in the world."

Nell Larsen's appraisal of her WARD experience was more personal, yet offers a telling insight into the prevailing attitude toward women in the American workplace in the 1940s. "The most memorable aspect of my service was the respect and admiration for American women I came to have as a result of my total war experience in Hawaii," said Larsen. "We were so often pictured as spoiled, hysterical and shallow. The women I came in contact with disproved all of that in spades."

The WARDS stood their last shift in Lizard on September 27. More than 650 women had served in Hawaii's control centers, representing all the islands' races except the Japanese and nearly all the states in the Union.

For the most part young, hastily trained and not widely appreciated, the "shuffleboard pilots" who volunteered to help protect the Hawaiian Islands by staffing its plotting boards had filled a vital need at a critical time.

This article was abstracted by an article written by Ronald R. Gilliam and originally published in Aviation History Magazine. To read Ronald's entire article please see the May 2002 issue.

REUNIONS

7th Fighter Command 2004 Reunion

We have been invited to join the 330th Bomb Group in their Last Reunion, which will be held in Dayton, Ohio on October 13-17, 2004. It will be similar to our reunion in Seattle as the activities will center around the Air Force Museum at Wright Patterson AFB. More details will be forthcoming in the next Newsletter to be published in June.

318th Fighter Group 2004 Reunion

The 318th is in the planning stages of their next reunion which will be held in Pittsburgh PA later this year. More details to follow in the next Newsletter. Those of you in the 318th will also be getting separate announcements of the event.

78th Fighter Squadron 2004 Reunion

The 78th is in the planning stages of their next reunion, which will be held in Orlando Florida on April 22-24. Those of you in the 78th will be getting a separate notice in the near future.

NEWS

On-Line Roster Available

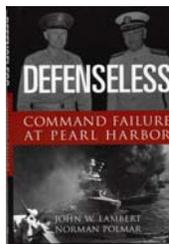
If you have access to the Internet then you may have access to the 7th Roster. Here you will be able to look up olds friends and make new ones. You might be amazed at how many 7th veterans live in your area. In order to access the Roster you will need a computer with access to the Web that also has Microsoft Excel installed. Then visit the web site at: <http://www.7thfighter.com> and click on the "Roster" button. You will be asked for a username and password. The username is **bushmaster** and the password is **snakes**

7th Web Page

The 7th's Web page (<http://www.7thfighter.com>) will be expanding this year to include hundreds of photos that all of you have sent in as well as the stories that you have sent the association. In addition, Group and Squadron records as well as other wartime documents will be available to read. While it is recognized that many of you may not have access to the internet, the prime purpose of the Web page is to educate and inform your extended family as well as the general public as to what role the 7th Fighter Command played in WWII.

New Book On Pearl Harbor

Jack Lambert has just released a new book on Pearl Harbor called Defenseless. Many of you may be familiar with Jack's book of the 15th Fighter Group The Long Campaign and of his book on the 7th The Pineapple Air Force. Jack presents new information that attempts to clarify just who was and who was not responsible for the unprepared state of the United States at Pearl Harbor that fateful day.



HELP NEEDED

Letters to the Editor

(Anyone with answers to the below questions, please contact the Editor so I can put you in touch with them)

I am trying to find anyone who served with **Dick Liptak** in the 506th fighter group, 457th fighter squadron on Iwo Jima. I knew him from church and was given his military items. I am trying to find out info on him for his daughters. He never talked about the war. My name is Steve Watts

Trying to find anyone with information on my uncle 1 LT **Henry R. Wiese** 12th Fighter Squadron, 18th Fighter Group Died: Monday, February 19, 1945 MIA. Thanks Hank

My father was Staff Sergeant **Fred Sofio** and I have a newspaper clipping which says he was the crew chief for Lt. **Robert J. Stone** in the 7th AAF, 333rd FS. The article told of Stone's harrowing day over Kyushu where he shot down 5 enemy planes. I also discovered he was previously crew chief for Lt. **Bill Eustis** until Eustis' plane was shot down in January, 1945. When I was growing up my Dad wouldn't talk about the years he served, and since he died when I was 21 I didn't get a chance to ask him once I'd grown up.... I would like to track down other members who knew him. Pat Panik

Greetings from Okinawa: I am having a P-51 model made for my grandfather who was a P-51 pilot in WWII. I know he was part of the 7th Fighter Command. My question is, is there any way to find out what squadron he was attached to? (He doesn't remember) His name is Vincent Augustus Gaudiani, he was flying until he was captured as a POW right before the end of the war. Thanks! Vera Fry (Editors note: I believe he was with the 506th FG, Squadron unknown)

I am the nephew of Lt. Robert Klippel. He was part of the 506th Fighter Group, 457th Fighter Squadron, when his P-51 was lost on June 1, 1945. The 506th FG was based on Iwo Jima at this time. On the date in question, the Group, with two other Fighter Groups, was escorting B-29 bombers on a mission to Osaka, Japan. However, the P-51s ran into unexpectedly bad weather; in all, 27 P-51s were lost, 11 of which belonged to the 506th FG. This is the only info I have on him or the event. I would like to make contact with anyone who knew him and is still alive. Thank You, Garth T. Katner

History and Memories

How can you help? From 1941 to 1945, thousands of men and women of the 7th Fighter Command left the security of their homes for the uncertainty of war in unfamiliar lands to do their duty, very often at the sacrifice of life and limb. It is now our duty to compile for present and future generations an accurate account of the sacrifices they made and the parts they played in the Second World War. As the recruiting poster of WWII stated, "We Need You" . . . again! Please help us preserve your legacy. Please assist us in the challenge of collecting and preserving the historical contributions of the 7th. We cannot protect that heritage without your cooperation. All too frequently these items are undervalued not only by the families to which they are left, but even by you the veterans. Between your modesty relating to your personal achievements and a hesitancy in asserting the worth of your memorabilia, these irreplaceable historical materials are being misplaced or discarded.

General Douglas MacArthur once said, "Old soldiers never die; they just fade away." Through the preservation of written words, film, and war mementos, your experiences will not be lost.

Especially helpful right now are Aircraft photos, which are useful in helping me to identify as many of the 7th's aircraft as possible. Color photos of any kind would be most appreciated. For instance, there is a great controversy among historians as to what color the 47th's P-51's were. You and I know it was Blue and Yellow but with out photographic evidence I can't prove it.

You can send me your original documents and photos and I will scan them and return them to you promptly. If you are not in a hurry, please let me know as I get quite a backlog of material at times. Please consider an outright donation of the materials or consider leaving the materials to the 7th in your Estate.

All material will be archived in the 7th's records and then a search will be made for a permanent home for the materials, probably in the National Archives. The Associations archives will be indexed on the Internet on our web page and made equally accessible to family, the scholar, the historian, and the average citizen. In short, anyone interested in understanding the virtually unknown, and untold history of the Seventh Fighter Command. Each small piece of history the Association receives is another square on the patchwork quilt of our understanding to help us **Preserve Your Legacy**.

ASSOCIATION DONATIONS

Thank You to all of you who have been able to donate to the association. To date 180 of you have donated, and thanks to your generosity the Newsletter will continue to be published on a twice a year basis. Since there are no required dues in the association, and all activities including this newsletter are dependent on your generous donations. For those of you that have not gotten your donations in, it's never to late. Once again, if you have enjoyed this newsletter and would like to see more like this, we need your help. We now have enough funds to publish this newsletter, plus possibly two more. Once again, It is understood that many of you are on fixed incomes, but If

you are able to help, any donation would be appreciated. **Please send any donations to:** Jim Van Nada, 4095 Berrywood Drive, Eugene, OR 97404-4061 Make all checks payable to the 7th Fighter Command Association. All donations are tax deductible.

COMMUNICATION

Be sure to let us know if you move. We get many newsletters returned due to bad addresses.

TAPS



The following list indicates those comrades who we have gotten notification of passing on since the last issue of Sunsetter. If you know of any members who have passed on recently, please be so kind as to inform the Gazette.

Name	Unit	DOD
Anderson, Don C.	47th	08/06/01
Baker, John	318th	12/28/98
Bauman, Frederick A.	78th	05/16/03
Bechtel, Paul S.	12th	03/03/03
Bregar, A. J.	72nd	11/28/03
Cuevas, Henry G.	19th	02/24/03
Hyde, Gordon R.	78th CO	01/07/03
Larsen, Nell White	WARDSO	Unknown
Martin, Fred K.	47th	03/22/00
Mattson, Conrad E.	78th	08/02/01
Mawn, John J.	333rd	03/08/97
McAlpin, L. L.	19th	12/07/91
Menza, Nicholas	437th	01/19/03
Moore, Robert W.	45th	04/21/03
Needham, Marvin K.	73rd	02/06/03
Nichols, Franklin A.	6th	09/16/02
Padley, Harland W.	47th	04/01/99
Parish, Lucien	78th	11/07/02
Pearce, Wilfred A.	19th	11/27/00
Raymen, Peter H.	548th NFS	06/07/99
Reineke, Lawrence	7th	09/18/03
Rohan, Clifford P.	19th	02/24/01
Steele, William S.	15th	07/12/97
Swanson, John W.	6th	09/09/91
Teresi, Nicholas F.	78th	07/17/03
Todd, Cedric W.	72nd	04/23/01

In addition to the above names, I have identified many more individuals through Social Security Records who have passed on. These names as well as all known deceased members are published on the Associations Web page.



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Address Correction Requested

Web Page <http://www.7thfighter.com>

Newsletter of the Seventh Fighter Command
World War II

Mark Stevens – Editor
mark@7thfighter.com

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