

Barbara Gotham
380th Bomb Group Association
2019 Hopi Code Talkers Event
April 23, 2019

ABOUT THE 380TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) WORLD WAR II

The 380th Bombardment Group (Heavy) was part of the 5th Air Force and were known as the FLYING CIRCUS and also as the KING OF THE HEAVIES (note the lion in the insignia).

They flew B-24 Liberator bombers primarily in the Southwest Pacific Theatre in WWII.

In addition to flying combat missions, the group operated as a training unit for Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) crews in B-24 operations.

The group was awarded both the United States Distinguished Unit Citation and the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation for its combat service in Borneo, New Guinea and the Philippines.



QUICK FACTS ABOUT THE BOMBER GROUP IN WORLD WAR II

- ❖ **Constituted as 380th Bombardment Group (Heavy) on 28 October 1942**
- ❖ **Activated on 3 November 1942 at Davis-Monthan Field, Tucson, Arizona**
- ❖ **Inactivated on 20 February 1946 at Clark Field, Luzon (Philippines)**

Squadrons

528th Bombardment Squadron: 1942–1946

Mascot: HERKY, the clown riding a bomb

529th Bombardment Squadron: 1942–1946

Mascot: LITTLE BEAVER, sidekick of Red Ryder in 1930s cowboy movies

530th Bombardment Squadron: 1942–1946

Mascot: BUGS BUNNY

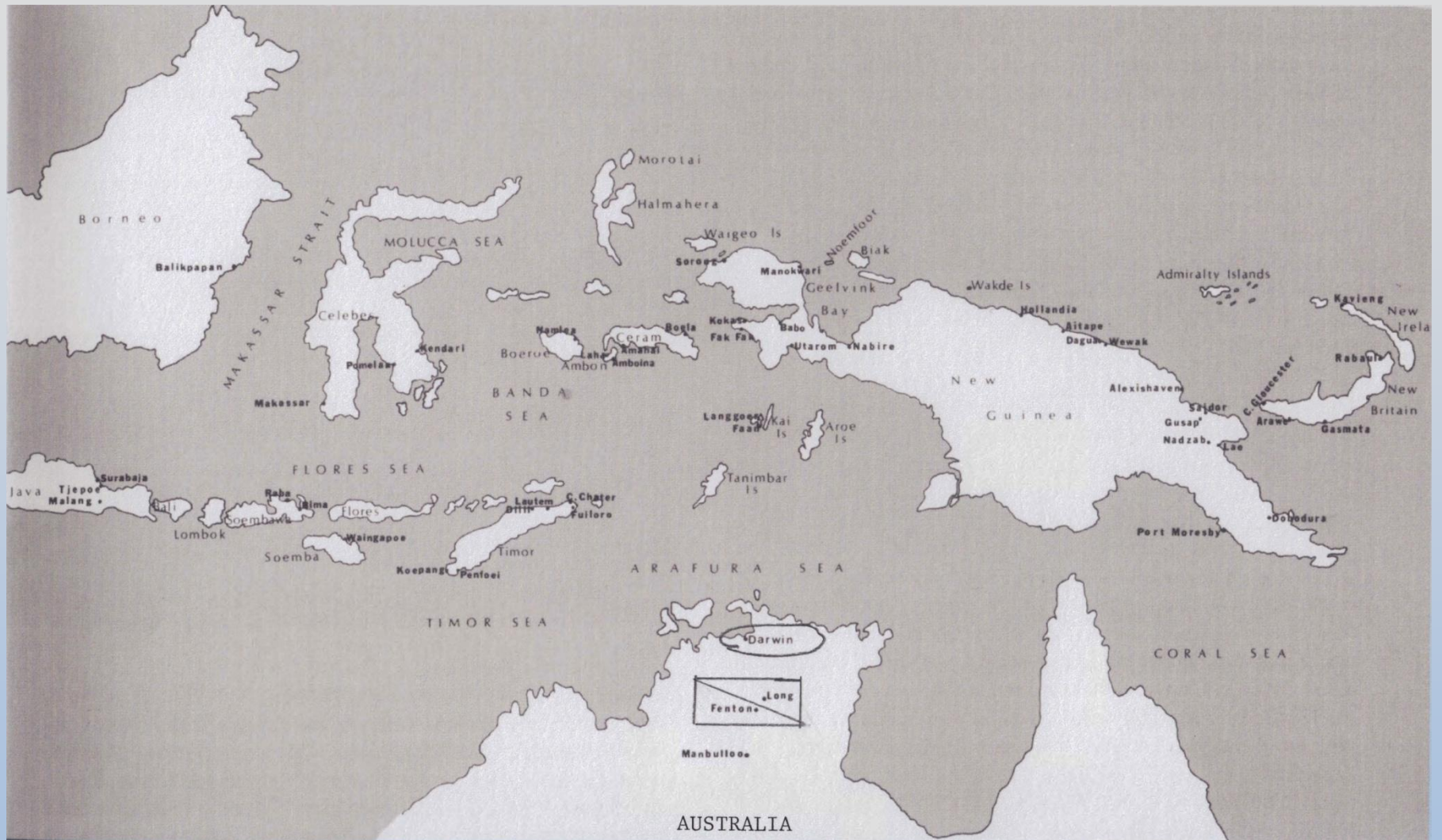
531st Bombardment Squadron: 1942–1946

Mascot: a fierce DONALD DUCK

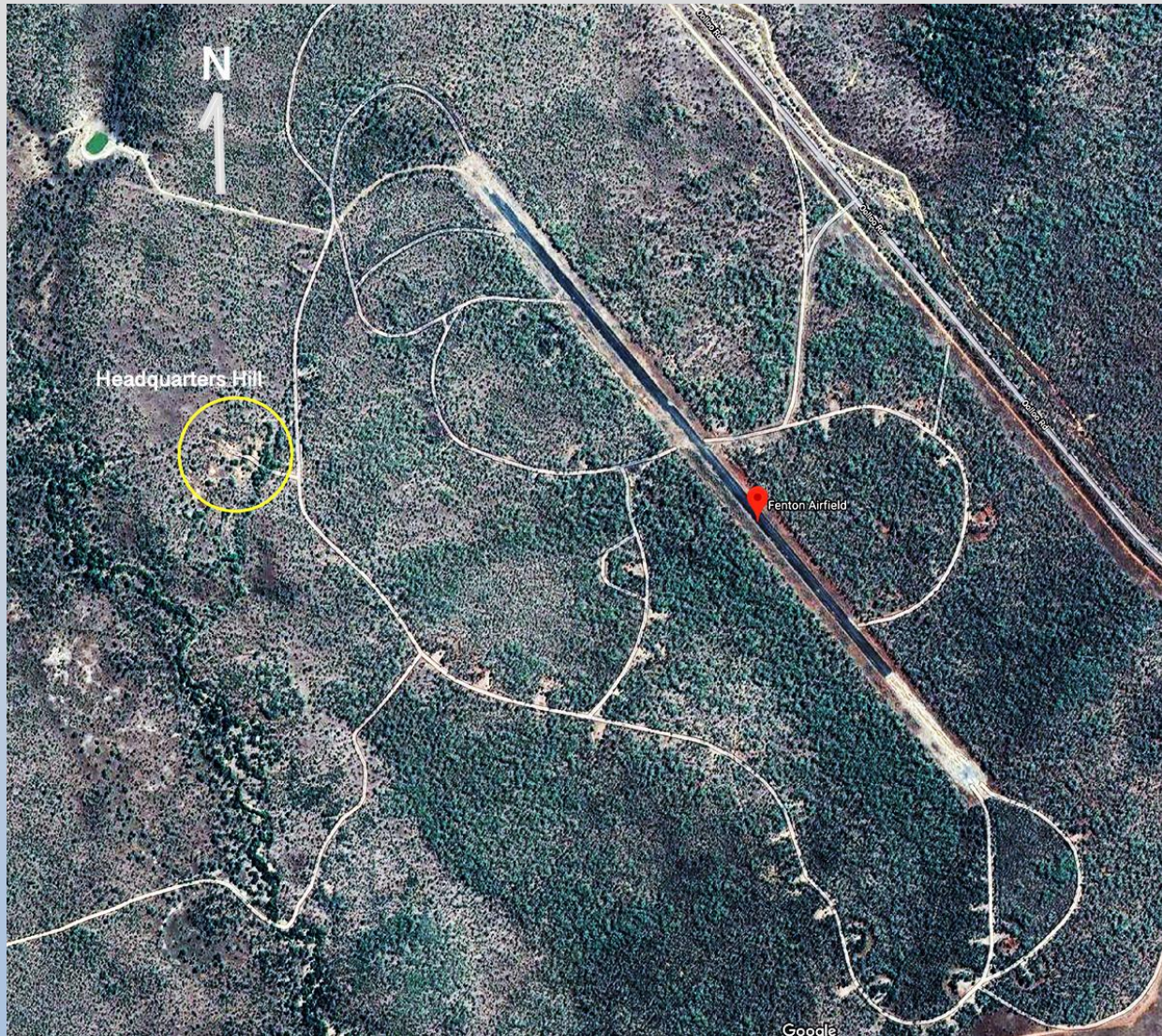
ASSIGNMENTS AND STATIONS

Stations

- ★ **Davis-Monthan AAF, Arizona, 3 November 1942**
- ★ **Biggs AAF, Texas, 2 December 1942**
- ★ **Lowry AAF, Colorado, 4 March – 17 April 1943**
- ★ **Fenton Airfield, Australia, May 1943**
- ★ **RAAF Base Darwin, Australia, 9 August 1944**
- ★ **McGuire Field, Mindoro, Philippines, 20 February 1945**
- ★ **Motobu Airfield, Okinawa, 9 August 1945**
- ★ **Fort William McKinley, Luzon, 28 November 1945 – 20 February 1946**



The Southwest Pacific Region – World War II



Fenton Field – Headquarters Hill circled in yellow



Current Map of Indonesia and Australia

FIFTH AIR FORCE HOPI CODE TALKERS



Rex Pooyouma, 380th Bomb Group



Orville Wadsworth, 90th Bomb Group

PERSONNEL

- **It takes many people, skilled in a wide variety of different tasks, to staff a heavy bombardment group of approximately 8,000 personnel.**
- **While the flight crews who man the planes on their battle missions receive the glory and take the risks of combat, many others behind the scenes at the home air base of the group must repair and service the planes, and carry out all the other operations that allow an organization the size of a small city to survive anywhere in the world.**

PERSONNEL

- **Air crews were comprised of a pilot (also known as aircraft commander), co-pilot, navigator, bombardier, flight engineer, radio operator, and gunners. Sometimes aerial photographers and others joined the crew on their missions.**
- **Ground crews were divided into sections:**
 - **Administration and Services**
Unit commanders, service officers (heads of departments), postal unit, laundry, mess hall, clerical, tailor, personnel services, chaplain services, bugler
 - **Armament**
Weapons mechanics, gunsmiths, armorers, power turret, bombsight and gunsight mechanics
 - **Communications**
Operators and mechanics for radar, electronics, radio, signal equipment, telephone, telegraph, dispatchers
 - **Engineering — Facilities Engineering and Maintenance**
Blacksmiths, bricklayers, carpenters, draftsmen, machinists, utility repairmen, surveyors, sanitary technicians, electrical, mechanical and civil engineers, firefighters
 - **Engineering — Aircraft and Other Equipment Maintenance**
Airplane mechanics, machinists, toolmakers

PERSONNEL

- **Intelligence**

Aerial photographers, cryptoanalytic (code) staff, translations, radio traffic analysis, geographers, cartographers, camouflage technicians

It is assumed that Rex Pooyouma, the 380th's Hopi Code Talker, was assigned to the Intelligence section (because of the secrecy of his assignment, very little is documented about his service with the 380th).

- **Medical**

Medical examiner, surgeons, dental, physical therapy, nurse (male), psychiatry, hospital technicians, pharmacy

- **Operations**

All aircraft crew (pilots, navigators, bombardiers, gunners, radio operators, flight engineers), aerial instructors, gunnery instructors, radar and weather observers, photography, meteorologist

- **Ordnance**

Ammunition and munitions workers

- **Supply**

- **Transportation**

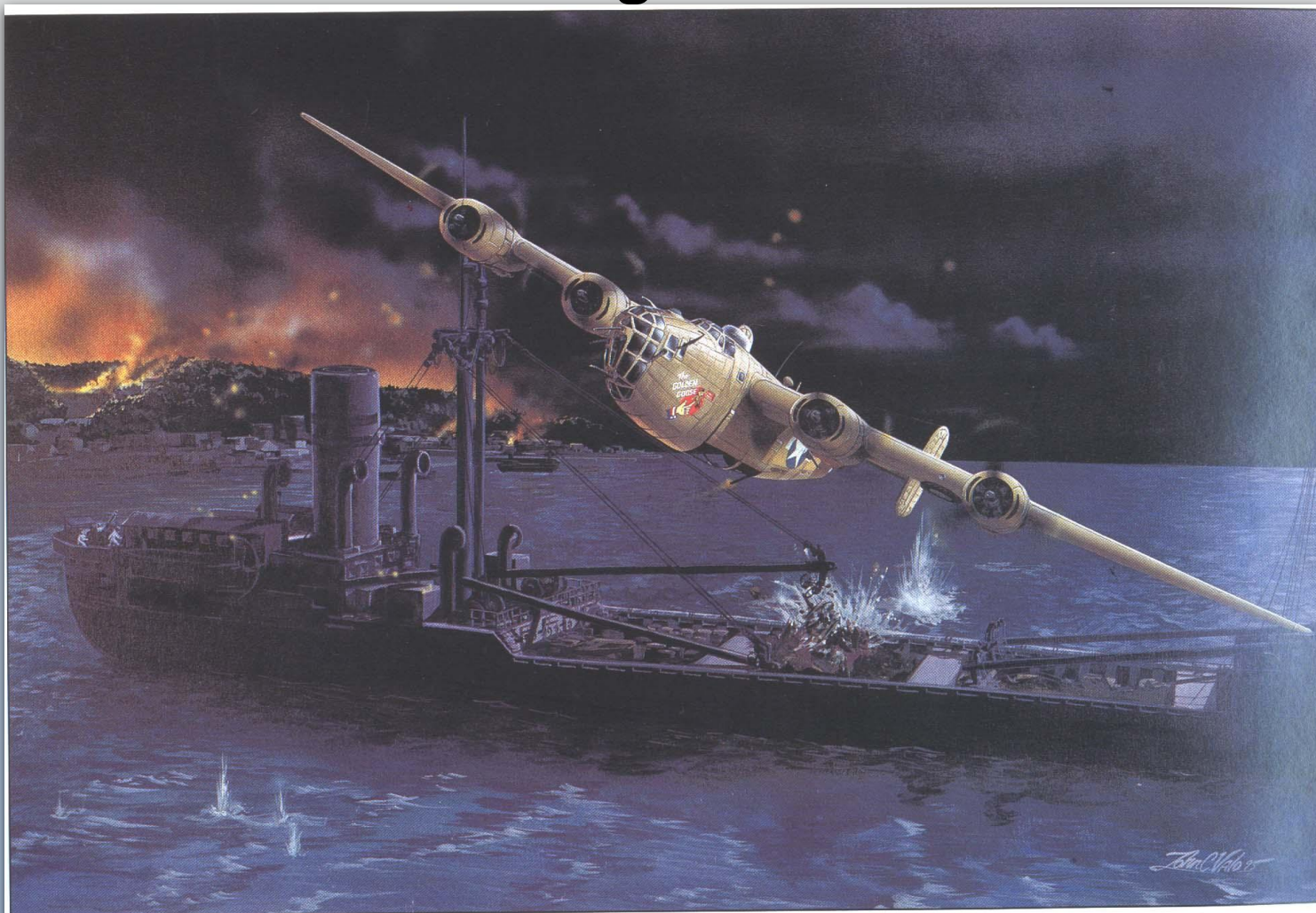
Ground transportation motor vehicles (drivers, mechanics, repairmen)

WWII OPERATIONS

- **Upon its arrival in Australia, the 380th immediately began reconnaissance missions and combat missions that, besides attacking the Japanese oil supply, worked to cripple the Japanese shipping fleet to reduce their capability of supplying their far-flung forces.**
- **The group also heavily bombed numerous Japanese airfields in the East Indies to reduce the Japanese threat to Australia and New Guinea.**
- **The 380th made the longest bombing missions of WWII, to the oil refineries at Balikpapan, Borneo (200 miles further than the longest mission in Europe).**
- **The two Balikpapan missions were in August 1943. Each was a 17 hour, non-stop, 2,700 mile round trip for the planes and crews.**

BOMBING OF BALIKPAPAN HARBOR

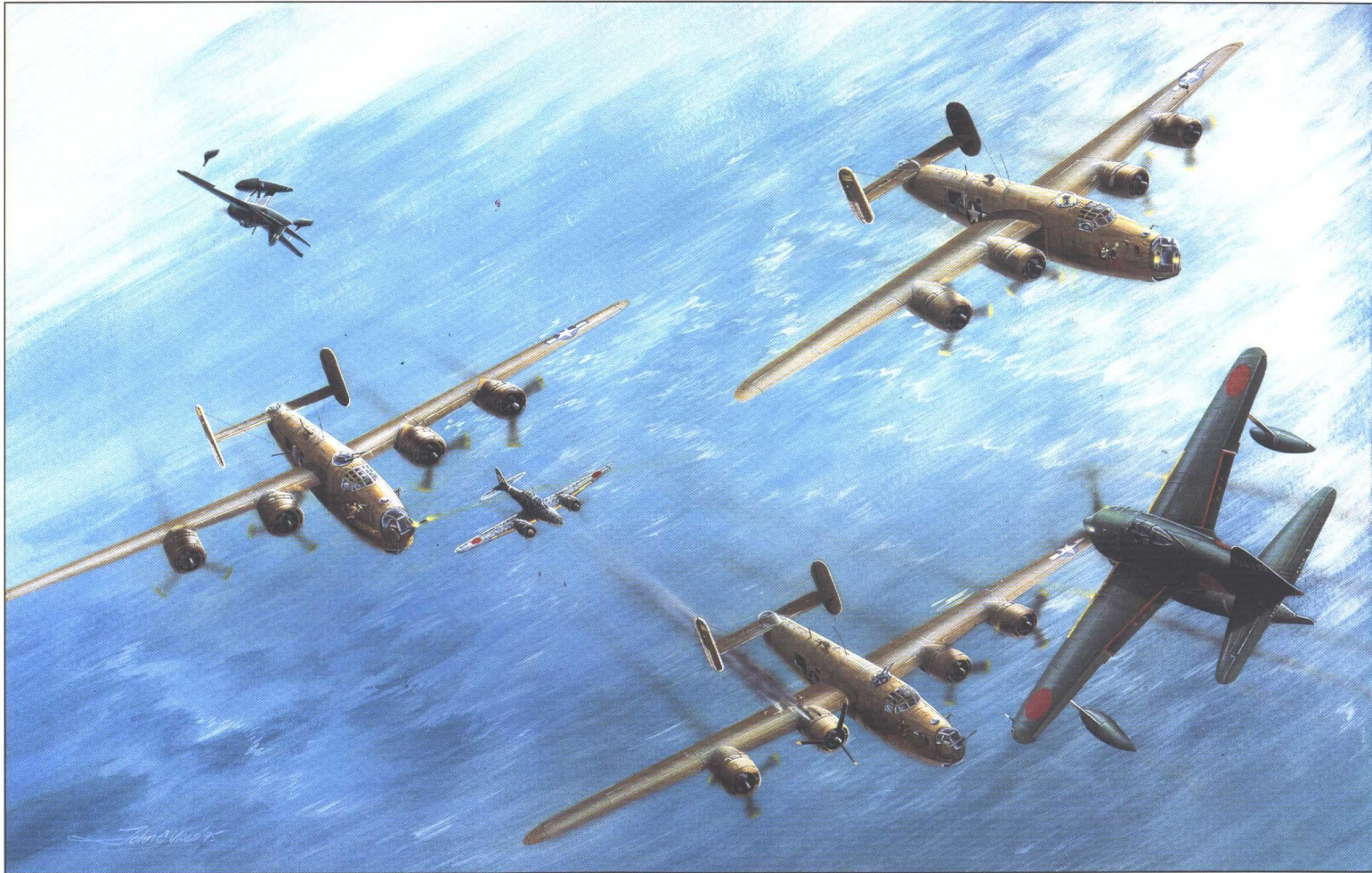
14 August 1943



Balikpapan harbor, Borneo. 14 August 1943, 0026hrs. Capt. Zed Smith, 528th CO, barely misses the masts of the *Katori Maru* with #521 *The Golden Goose*. He bombed it and the oil tank farm located further inland before escaping into the inky skies.

Painting by John C. Valo

AMBON HARBOR, 19 January 1944



High drama above Ambon harbor, 19 January 1944. With one engine feathered and smoking, Gorman Smith is protected by Carl Magee on the right and Bill Zagrobski on the left. Joe Wells, Magee's right waist gunner, is in the process of shooting down the *Nick* that is flying in the slot position.

Painting by John C. Valo

WWII OPERATIONS

- **The group also defended Corunna Downs Airfield, a top secret airfield in Western Australia where it was assigned to the Royal Australian Air Force's (RAAF) northwest area of operation. The Command's purpose was to engage in destroying Japanese strongholds in the Pacific.**
- **In August 1944 the group was placed under the operational control of the RAAF and were moved to their base at Darwin in the Northern Territory of Australia.**
- **At Darwin, they trained their Australian counterparts on the B-24 so the Australians could guarantee their own safety against Japanese invasion along its northern coast.**
- **The 380th trained 52 Australian crews and their ground staffs.**
- **In February 1945 the group moved to the Philippine Islands.**
- **In April 1945, Far East Air Force relieved the 380th of its ground support commitments in the Philippines.**

END OF THE WAR

- In June 1945 the 380th was under the operational control of the 13th Air Force for pre-invasion attacks in Borneo. After the Borneo raids, the 380th flew its last combat missions to Taiwan.
- When the war ended (2 September 1945), the 380th moved to Okinawa to fly reconnaissance patrols and to ferry released prisoners of war to Manila.
- On 18 October 1945, the unit was transferred to the 7th Air Force in the Philippines, where it moved to Clark Field on Luzon, and participated in the Sunset Project – returning B-24s and their crews to the United States.
- Although some aircraft and crews were flown back to the United States, most of the aircraft from inactivating units were simply scrapped at Clark Field and personnel were returned via Navy ships from Manila.
- The 380th Bombardment Group (H) was inactivated at Clark Field on 20 February 1946.

WORKING WITH THE AUSTRALIANS

- In its service with the Australians, the 380th served longer under the operational control of an Allied country than any other Air Force unit (from June 1943 until February 1945).
- They were the only U.S. B-24 Liberator unit attached to the RAAF. The RAAF had several of their own Liberator squadrons.
- Many of the Australians who trained with the 380th have become part of the 380th Bomb Group Association, the current veterans group – evidence of the strong ties of friendship which developed between the two countries in their long service together in World War II.

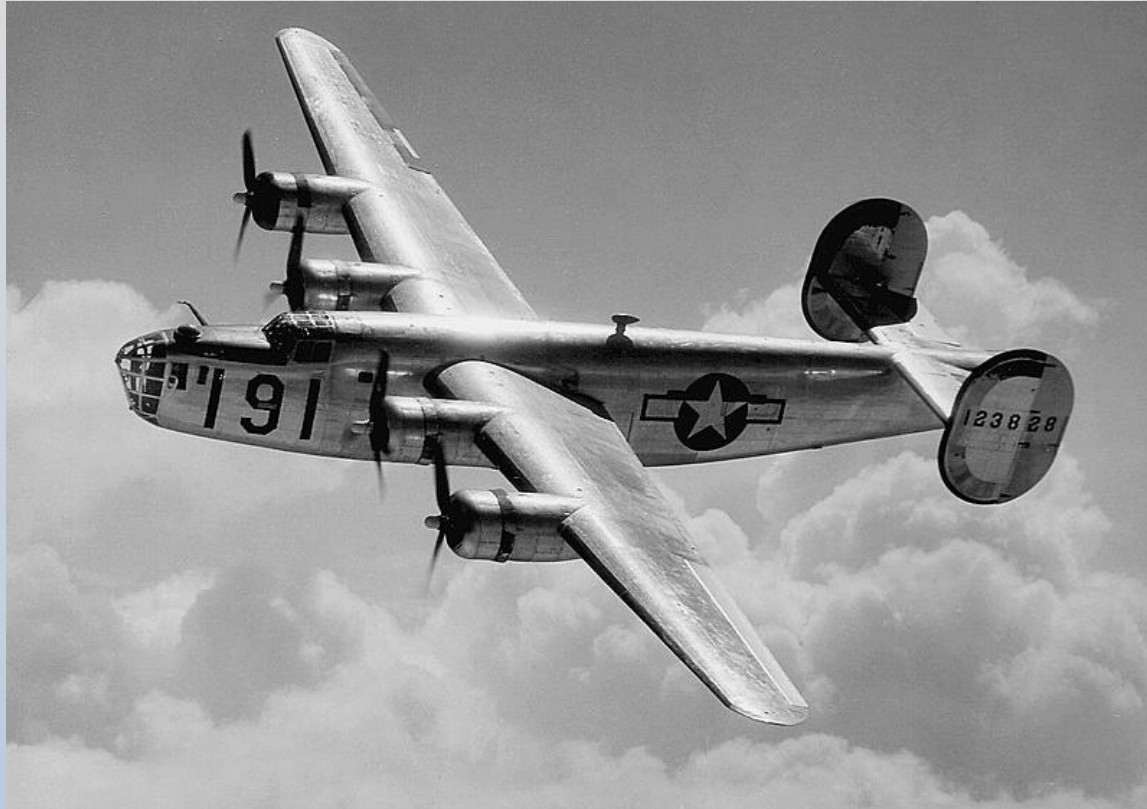
POST WORLD WAR II

- **The group was inactive from February 1946 to May 1947.**
- **They were an inactive reserve unit from May 1947 until May 1951, when they were called to active duty during the Korean War, but were only active for 15 days, at which time the group was again inactive.**
- **The 380th Bomb Wing was reactivated at Plattsburgh Air Force Base, New York, on 11 July 1955, flying the B-47 jet bomber, B-52 jet bomber, F-111, and later the KC 135 tanker. The 380th Bomb Wing was deactivated in 1994 and Plattsburgh AFB closed permanently in 1995.**

CURRENT OPERATIONS

- **Reactivated and redesignated as the 380th Expeditionary Operations Group in early 2002 to support the War in Afghanistan, the group participated in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).**
- **The 380th Expeditionary Operations Group (380 EOG) is the operational flying component of the United States Air Force 380th Air Expeditionary Wing and conducts combat operations as part of the Global War on Terrorism. It is a provisional unit stationed at Al Dhafra Air Base, United Arab Emirates, and is assigned to the United States Air Forces Central component of Air Combat Command (ACC).**

B-24 LIBERATOR

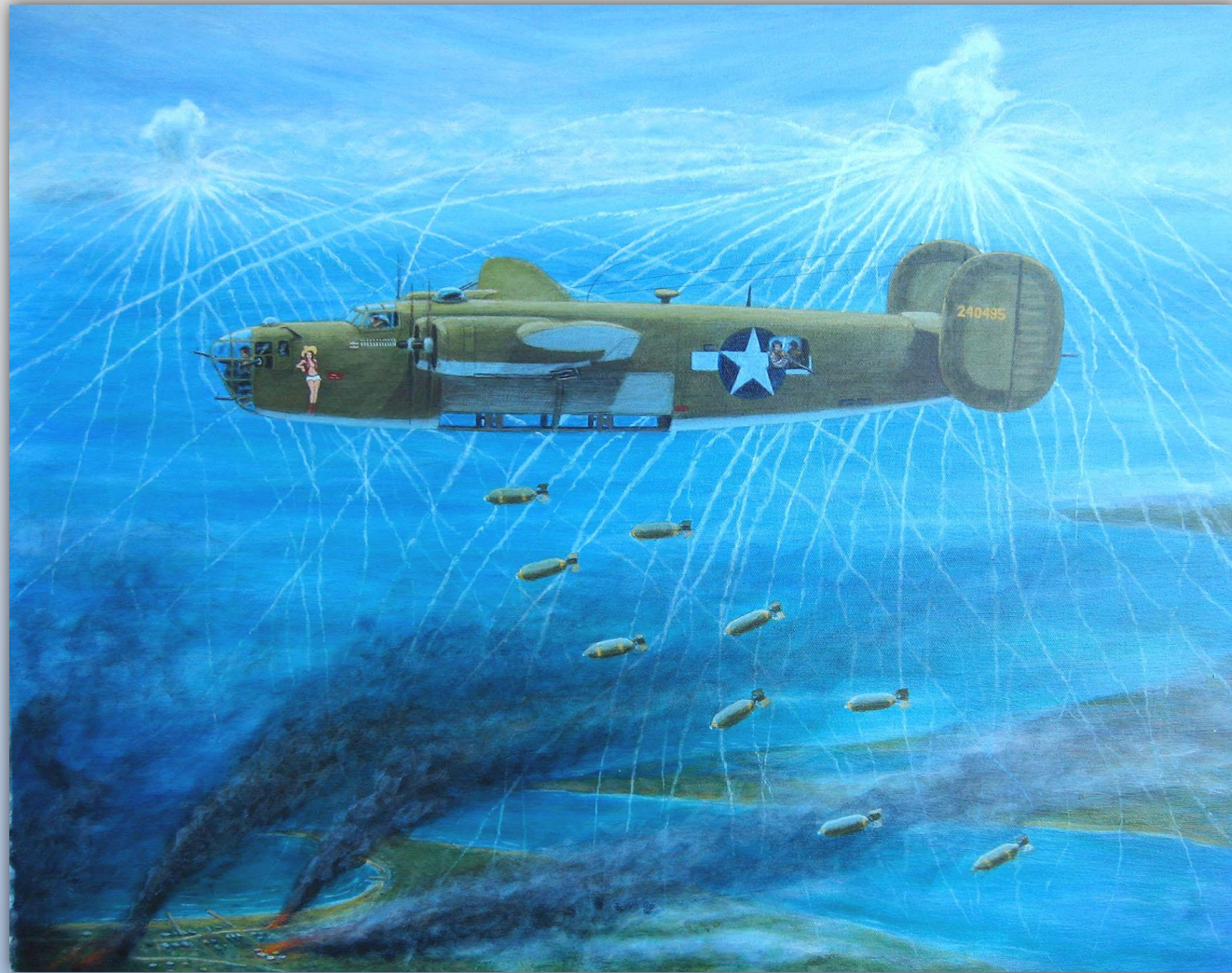


Source: Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consolidated_B-24_Liberator

B-24 AIRCRAFT

- **The basic unit of the United States Army Air Forces during World War II was the Group. Groups were built around the operational use of a specific type of airplane. In the case of the 380th, this was the B-24 Liberator Bomber.**
- **These planes were used in a particular class of mission suited to their capabilities. This was heavy bombardment associated with a large fraction of reconnaissance missions, particularly in the Australian phase of the 380th's service in the 5th Air Force.**
- **US Air Force bombers were designated as H for heavy, M for medium, or L for light. This designation was based on total weight of bomb loads they could carry, their flying range, and number of engines. So the heavy bombers were the B-24s, B-17s, and B-29s.**
- **The 380th was assigned to the South West Pacific War Area because of the long-range capabilities of the Liberator and the need for its services there at that point in the war (Spring 1943).**
- **A total of 137 planes served in the 380th in Australia and New Guinea. Of these, 53 served further in The Philippines.**



B-24D “Dauntless Dottie”

Painting by William Shek

ABOUT THE B-24 LIBERATOR

- **The Consolidated B-24 Liberator is a 4-engine, twin-tail American heavy bomber designed by an American heavy bomber designed by Consolidated Aircraft of San Diego, California. Its first flight was on 29 December 1939, and it began service in 1941.**
- **The B-24 provided excellent service in a variety of roles due to its ability to carry a heavy bomb load and its long-range capabilities.**
- **At approximately 18,500 units – including over 4,600 manufactured by Ford Motor Company – it holds records as the world's most produced bomber, heavy bomber, multi-engine aircraft, and American military aircraft in history.**
- **The B-24 was used extensively in World War II. It served in every branch of the American armed forces, as well as several Allied air forces and navies, and saw use in every theater of operations. Along with the B-17, the B-24 was the mainstay of the U.S. strategic bombing campaign in the Western European theater. Due to its range, it proved useful in bombing operations in the Pacific, including the bombing of Japan.**
- **Source: Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consolidated_B-24_Liberator**

380TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

- **The 380th Bomb Group Association was formed to preserve the history of the 380th Bombardment Group (H), 5th Air Force, World War II.**
- **The first association operated from 1983-1999. Their activities included newsletters and annual reunions.**
- **The current veterans' association was started in 1999 and continues today. Annual reunions were held from 2000-2018; they were discontinued after the 2018 event due to the health and age of our WWII veterans. Future reunions are possible, just not on an annual basis.**
- **Activities of the current association include the history project (WE WENT TO WAR series), newsletters, website, and Facebook pages.**

380TH HISTORIES

- ***THE FLYING CIRCUS - 380TH BOMB GROUP***, by James E. Fain, Jr., Howard L. Bergman, Grant C. Cannon and Julian A. Riser, Intelligence Officers of the 380th Bomb Group, Commanday-Roth Co., New York, NY, 1946, 190 pp. Reprinted 1988.
- ***KING OF THE HEAVIES - 380TH BOMB GROUP, 1942-1945***, by Glenn R. Horton, Jr., and Gary L. Horton. Library of Congress Card Number 83-90348. Privately published, 1983, 184 pp.
- ***THE BEST IN THE SOUTHWEST - THE 380TH BOMB GROUP IN WORLD WAR II***, by Glenn R. Horton, Jr., Library of Congress Card Number 95-079703, ISBN 0-9645959-0-7. Mosie Publications, Savage, MN, 1995, 513 pp.

Please note that all three of these books are out of print.

Check military bookstores/libraries, eBay, and other resources for available copies.

HISTORY PROJECT: WE WENT TO WAR

A Detailed History of the 380th Bombardment Group (H) in World War II

<http://380th.org/HISTORY/History.html>

PART I Roster of the 380th Bomb Group

PART II Roster of the Flight Crews

PART III Our Brothers-at-Arms (RAAF Rosters and Crews)

PART IV A Listing of MOS/SSNs

PART V The Planes We Flew: Australia/New Guinea Campaign

PART VI The Planes We Flew: Philippines Campaign

PART VII The Ground Staff of the 380th Bomb Group (H)

PART VIII The Missions We Flew: Australia/New Guinea Campaign - (PDF list of missions) *

PART IX The Missions We Flew: Philippines Campaign - (PDF list of missions) *

PART X The Background of Our Service, Why We Were in the Southwest Pacific Area: A Review

PART XI Our Opposition: The Japanese Flying Units in the Southwest Pacific

*** Expanded content underway**

CONTACT INFORMATION

For info on membership, newsletters, correspondence, history project, website, TAPS information, and more, contact:

❖ ***380th Bomb Group Association***

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❖ ***Our Facebook group page can be found at:
380th Bombardment Group (5th AF, WWII)***

❖ ***Website: <http://380th.org/380.html>***

THANK YOU!!

Thanks so much for this opportunity to talk about the 380th Bomb Group at this special event honoring the Hopi Code Talkers.

Our veterans' association didn't learn about the code talker in the 380th (Rex Pooyouma) until 2011. We are honored to have had him serve with the 380th in WWII!