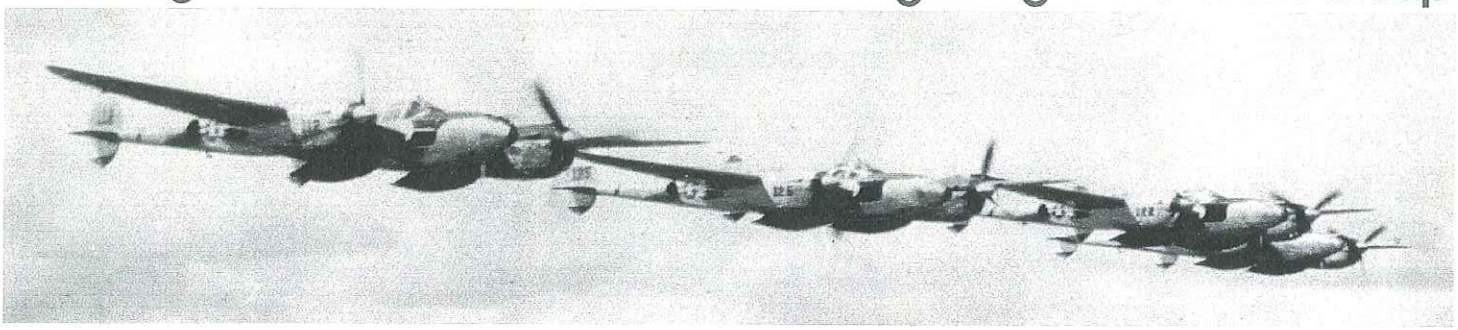
SATAN'S ANGELS

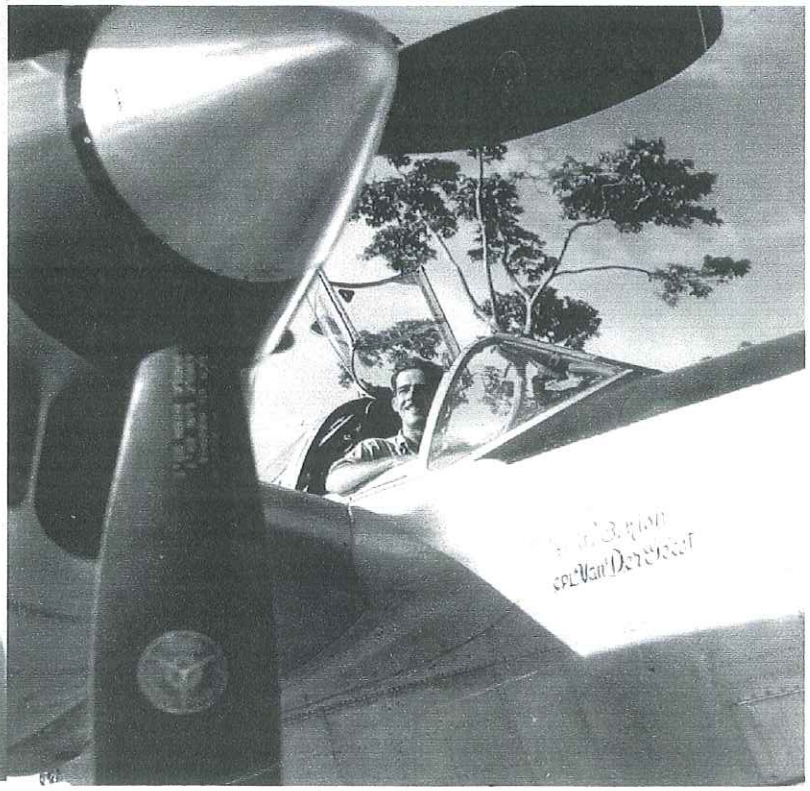
475th Fighter Group HISTORICAL FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

Featuring the men and the Lockheed P38 Lightning of the 475th Group



Major Thomas B. McGuire Jr.
475th Fighter Group-431st Fighter Squadron
CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR

431st HADES SQUADRON



Vol. 1, No. 1 This issue featuring Major Thomas B. McGuire Jr. **May 2000**

475th Fighter Group FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

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Front cover photographs

Top: rare shot of 431st FS planes flying low and abreast (not used in battle formation) believed to be Louie DuMontier, Ken Hart, Fred Champlin, R.L. "Red" Herman, 431st FS.

Bottom - left: Portrait photo of Tom Mcguire available from the 475th Fighter Group

Bottom - right: rare shot of starboard side shows crew chiefs name forward of wing

This issue dedicated to:

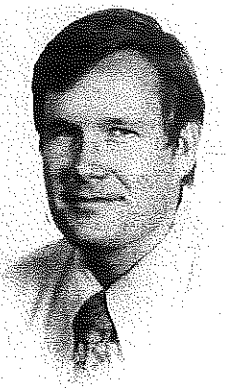
Lt. Carroll R. "Andy" Anderson

In fond memory and gratitude of his duties as 475th FG Historian ... without his contributions of personal photographs and memorabilia, our memories would not be as vivid

Table of Contents

Museum Director's Report

Welcome to the first issue of our own **475th Fighter Group** newsletter! Designed to provide ***strictly historical news*** regarding the 475th's involvement in World War II through the Korean occupation, this will focus on the stories and anecdotes of all the people and ground crew involved. As has long been planned, we have the good fortune to use and share the historical memorabilia from the collections of Captain Dennis "Coop" Cooper, Col. Charles MacDonald, Lt. Carroll "Andy" Anderson and also the writings of Charles Martin, and John Stanaway. Each issue will feature memorable figures such as: Major Thomas B. McGuire, Jr, Charles H, Lindbergh, Lt. Col. George W. Prentice, Col. Charles H. MacDonald, Lt. Col. John S. Loisel and Major Richard I. Bong. Your comments and feedback are always appreciated, and we hope you enjoy reviewing these very important historical accounts.



Lee Northrop
475th Museum Director

Some articles are extracted from *books available for sale:* page 18

THE LAST GREAT ACE *by Charles A. Martin*
LIGHTNING STRIKES *by Ronald W. Yoshino*
POSSUM, CLOVER & HADES *by John Stanaway*

Frank Nichols about Tom McGuire

When I graduated from flying school in April 1941, I was assigned to Wheeler Field, Hawaii to fly fighters. I was elated, as this was my first choice and I arrived there ready to be a gung-ho fighter pilot and to enjoy living it up in Hawaii.

Then on 7 December 1941, the Japanese changed my life forever and we were playing a different game. It became a matter of survival ---- kill or be killed.

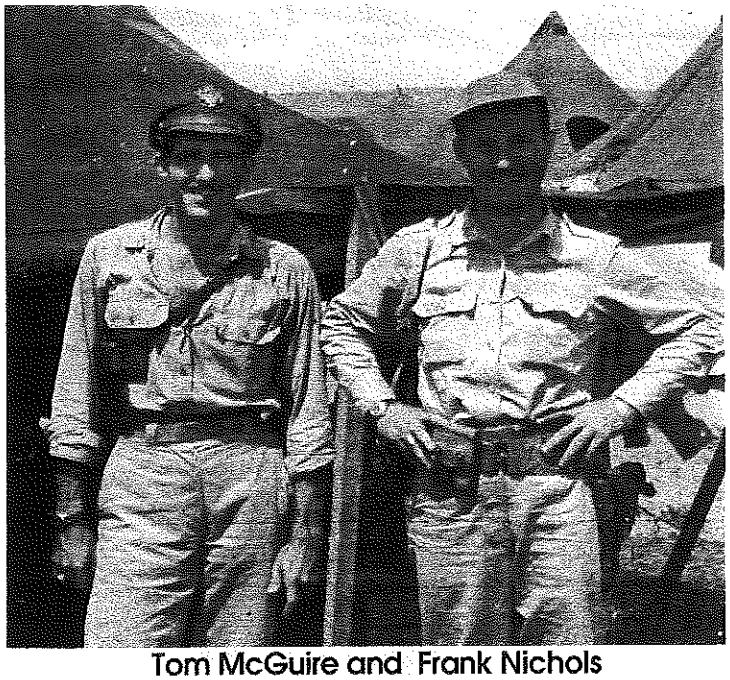
In August of 1942,

I volunteered for the Fifth Air Force in Australia and joined the 7th Fighter Squadron, 49th Fighter Group en route to Port Moresby, New Guinea, flying P-40s. Initially, I was a wingman, then a Flight Leader, and then Operations Officer of the squadron. I hoped that I would become the Squadron Commander of the 7th Squadron, but that was not to be.

Captain Frank Nichols
(later Major General)
1st C.O. of the 431st Sqdrn. at the first camp of the 475th, in Australia

months. I was walking on air. This was a chance to form a squadron using my ideas and my objectives and this is when I first met Tommy McGuire. He had recently been assigned to the 9th Fighter Squadron, of the 49th Group, and was reassigned as one of my combat-ready pilots, and he joined me in Brisbane. McGuire had little combat experience and no victories, but he had been in the Alaskan theater. Though I didn't know it at the time, he was one of the few pilots in the Pacific who had been trained to fly P-38s back in the States, and he was highly-qualified in this type aircraft.

At first I thought he was just another fighter jock and I welcomed him and turned him over to Captain John Hood, my Operations Officer. Two weeks passed before I had my first serious conversation with him. John Hood came to me with a problem of assigning McGuire. He should have been an element leader but none of the Flight Commanders wanted him. They all said that "he talks too much." It was strictly a matter of personality conflicts. I told John to send Mac to see me and I would try to resolve this petty personality problem. Mac didn't know that there was a problem, so I told him I needed an Assistant Engineering Officer who was highly-qualified in the P-38 to test fly all



Tom McGuire and Frank Nichols
at Hollandia

In March of 1943, Colonel Hutchison, the Group Commander, told me to pack my bags. I was going to activate a squadron, in a new twin-engined P-38 Fighter Group, being formed in Brisbane, Australia. Starting with experienced cadre from the 49th Group and the balance of the squadron, new personnel from the United States, we were to have the 431st Fighter Squadron combat-ready in three

Major Nichols
with his favorite plane at Port Moresby, New Guinea

Frank Nichols about Tom McGuire (continued)

the new aircraft arriving in the squadron.

He would okay each plane or recommend proper maintenance for it. Since I was beginning my flying transition into the P-38, I also told McGuire that I needed an experienced P-38 instructor pilot to check me out and get me combat ready in that aircraft.

Mac was delighted with the challenge and he never looked back. From that day on he was a productive member of my squadron. When I organized my special flight, Mac was always my wingman.

Major Franklin Nichols
first C.O. of the 431st Squadron

We met the three month challenge of achieving combat-ready status and we proceeded to Port Moresby the latter part of August and on the day after our arrival we flew our first combat mission. We were flying out of twelve-mile strip for a month, and waiting for our new strip to be completed across the mountains in the Buna area. In late September we finally got the squadron together as a complete unit. Our combat results had been outstanding. We had been on several successful air-to-air combat missions and our number of confirmed victories was rapidly growing. McGuire' s talents as a fighter pilot were soon evident and he was one of the first members of the Group to become an ace, shooting down five enemy aircraft. With long-range P-38s we were able to escort the bombers to new Japanese air bases at Wewak, Rabaul, and Hollandia, and our air-to-air opportunities had increased considerably during the period and Mac become one our leaders in confirmed kills.

On 16 October 1943, I received a call in the evening from Fifth Fighter Command telling me to report to General Wurtsmith the next day. I caught the courier early the next morning and arrived at his office about 10 o'clock. He explained that I had been selected to return to the states for one month's leave and said another month would be approved if I wanted to stay longer. He wanted to award the medals I was due, that day, so I could return that afternoon to make arrangements for change of command of the squadron and take care of details for my departure. I was elated but also sad that I was leaving the best job I ever had with the finest squadron any commander ever had.

Late that afternoon I caught the courier and returned to the squadron. I was met at the airplane with the news that my squadron had been involved in some heavy aerial combat defending American shipping in Oro Bay. The good news was that the 431st Squadron had made a big air-to-air interception of a large bomber and fighter force with great results. The bad news was that McGuire had been shot down after he had destroyed three enemy planes.

Later that evening we learned that McGuire had been picked up by a PT boat twenty miles off shore. He had "borrowed" my airplane, since his was in or repairs, and he had bailed out of the burning craft after being wounded. It was a miracle that he survived as his parachute had become entangled and opened just before he hit the water.

There were standing orders that no one would fly my airplane without my permission.

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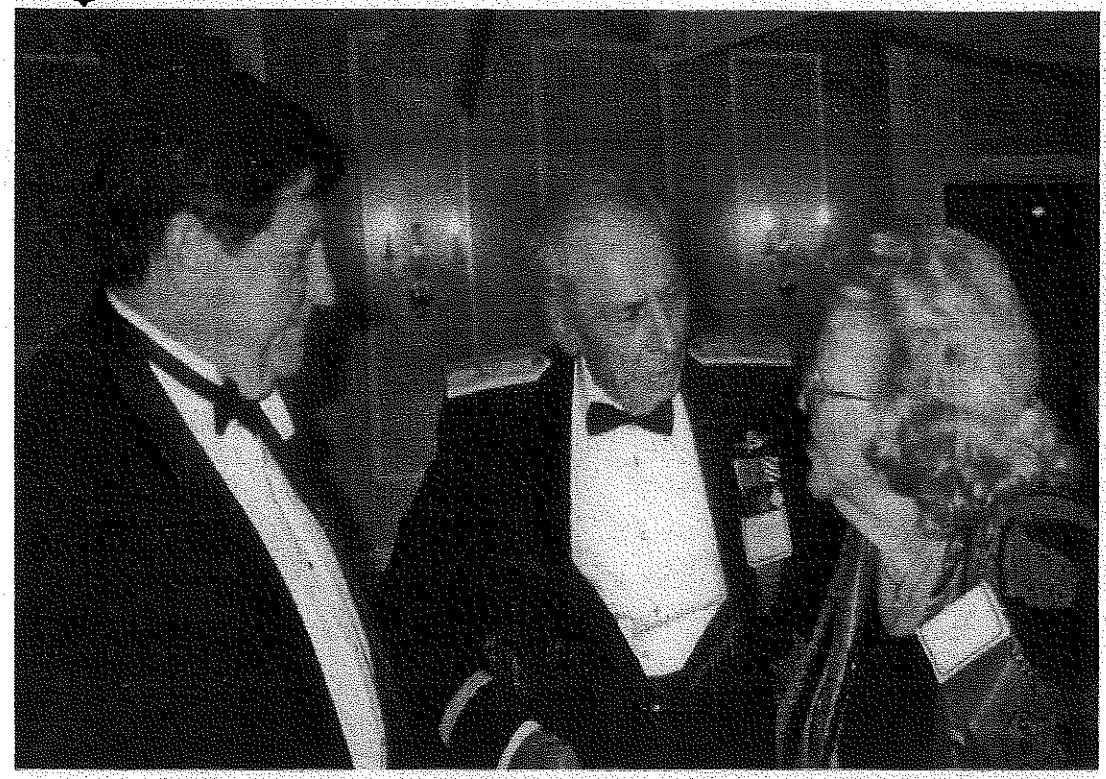
McGuire's Early Years



Charles A. Martin, General Robert L. Scott, author of *God Is My Co-Pilot* and Marilynn McGuire Beatty at the Enshrinement of Tommy McGuire into the Georgia Aviation Hall of Fame, Robins Air Force Base, 1997

McGuire's death was noted on the front page of the ***New York Times*** and in ***Time*** magazine. Seemingly an ordinary young man, he had risen to be one of America's most decorated heroes and died saving a friend's life. People in Sebring, Florida suffered when one of our boys died in the war. Small towns are like that. When McGuire died it left an empty spot. We knew so little of his exploits or how he died.

Sebring was started early in this century as a real estate development whose main attractions were land, climate, and a pristine lake a few blocks from the center of town. An early settler, Allen Altvater, said when he first saw Lake Jackson the bottom of the lake was as white as snow and the water was pure enough to drink, straight from the lake. Citrus groves were planted and agriculture and tourism were the main sources of income. Sebring prospered and two large hotels were built on Lake Jackson. The environment at these hotels was wonderful, but completely apart from the town and townspeople. A few months each year the parking lots were filled with big black automobiles, often attended by chauffeurs. When the north defrosted, the guests and the hotel employees went home and for the next eight months the hotels were closed. Sebringites and hotel people had almost nothing to do with each other. Out of this separated existence came the Watson family. They were well-to-do industrialists from Ridgewood, New Jersey, and they had wintered at the Kenilworth for a number of years. They chose to stay in Sebring after the hotel season was over and they became one of the first of the "hotel people" to become citizens of Sebring. They took a cottage near the lake. Their daughter Pauline McGuire divorced and moved in with her son, Tommy.

He grew up without a father and was thought to be a kind of spoiled mama's boy, but when the war came and his country needed leaders--he became a leader. He was one of America's greatest fighter pilots and most decorated soldiers of all time. He was also a leader of men, under the most trying of conditions.

McGuire was a member of one of America's most effective fighting units of World War II, the *475th* Fighter Group. They were remarkable people who organized during the war, and spent more than two years fighting under the most trying circumstances. The Japanese bombed them at night to deprive them of sleep. They were in steamy jungles where fungus and insects were king. The food furnished them was often unpalatable or quickly became moldy and they went hungry much of the time. It was reported Japanese soldiers could live on a handful of rice a day. These Americans proved they could live on meager rations too, and win a war. I'm glad they and Tommy McGuire were on our side.

Charles A. Martin
Fall of 1998

Introduction from the book
THE LAST GREAT ACE

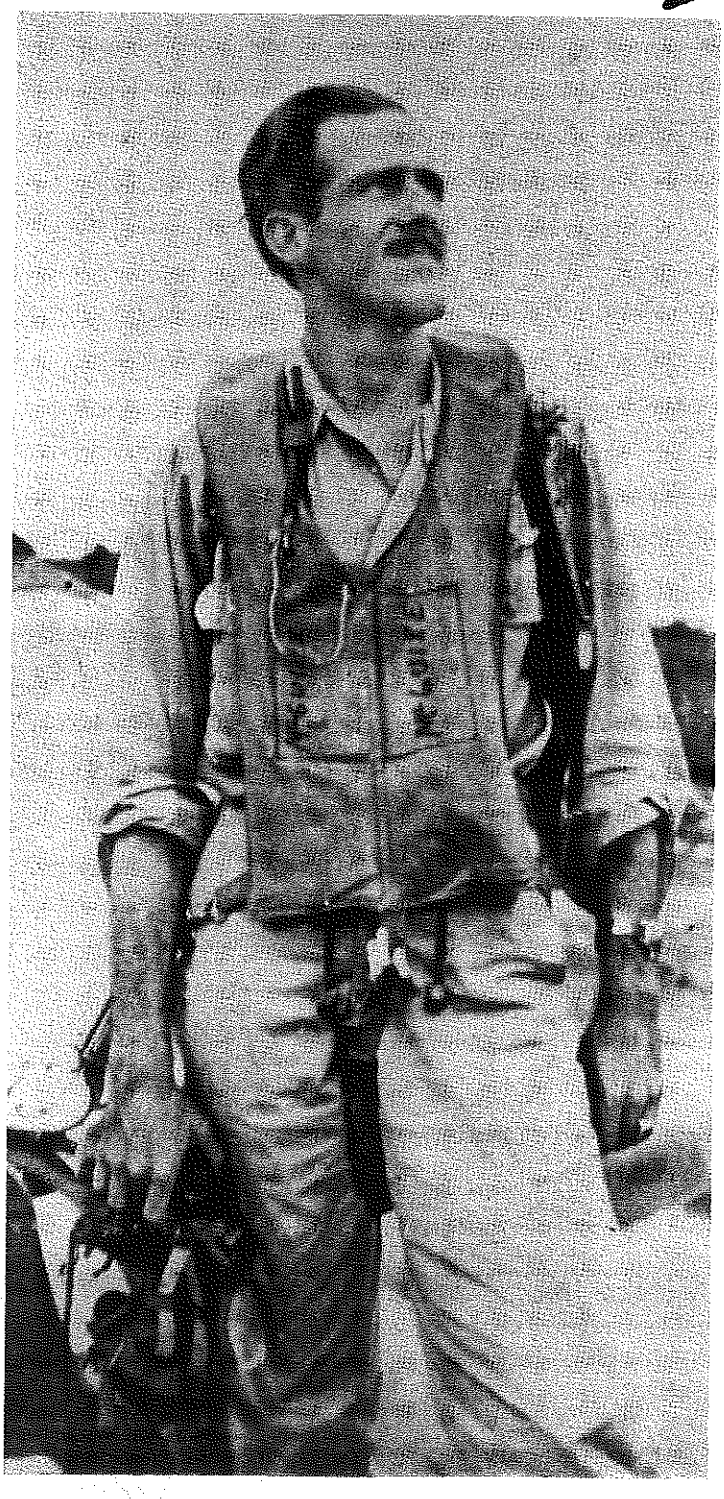
Flight Training, Cadet, Army Air Corp

After graduating from high school in 1938, McGuire entered the Georgia Institute of Technology and pursued a degree in aeronautical engineering. "He liked the good things in life," recalled his college roommate, Walter Weissenberger, "good food, good music, pretty girls. I think his whole mental attitude and character had a lot to do with becoming a fighter ace." McGuire also joined Georgia Tech's Army ROTC program and progressed to cadet sergeant major. He ultimately dropped out of college and enlisted in the Regular Army at MacDill Field, Florida, on July 12,1941. He was selected as an aviation cadet, then transferred to Corsicana, Texas, where he completed Primary Flight Training in September. McGuire moved on to Randolph Field, Texas, where he entered Basic Flight Training. In December, as America entered the war with Japan, he attended Advanced Flight Training at Kelly Field, from which he graduated in February 1942. He was then commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army Air Corps and rated as a pilot.

After being commissioned, McGuire entered extended active duty and received additional fighter training. He married Marilynn Giesler, an Incarnate Word College student on December 4, 1942, and shortly thereafter he deployed to Alaska and served in the Aleutians.

McGuire returned to the continental United States for additional combat training at Glendale, California, which took place between February 16 and March 7, 1943, and was alerted for foreign service. He departed California on March 14, and was assigned to the 9th Fighter Squadron, 49th Fighter Group, in Darwin, Australia. He was promoted to first lieutenant on June 1.

The 49th Fighter Group was equipped with P-40s, but at the time of his arrival McGuire was disappointed to learn the unit was restricted to training missions. The group provided air defense for the Northern Territory, frequently engaging the enemy in aerial combat. On July 20, he was transferred from the group to the 431st Fighter Squadron, 475th Fighter Group, at Amberley Field, Australia. Here McGuire held a number of squadron positions, including fighter pilot, squadron operations officer and, ultimately, Commanding Officer. He was later transferred to group headquarters and served as Operations officer. The 475th Fighter Group was equipped with P-38 Lightnings and was tasked to provide long-range bomber escort. McGuire came to love the P-38 and mastered the aircraft that many other pilots regarded with contempt.



McGuire and the 475th

One of the stellar *475th* pilots, introduced to combat for the first time during Mission 7, was Lieutenant Thomas B. "Mac" McGuire, Jr.

The 431st Squadron, to which McGuire belonged, got briefed the night before, part of a maximum effort that would send seventy-four Lightnings out to protect the Fifth's medium and heavy bombers. Group formations were discussed with two dominating the mission. By mid-1943 fighter formations had grown in sophistication and efficiency. On the way to their rendezvous with the bombers Satan's Angels adopted a "route formation," stepped up diamonds of four flights with flight two above, behind, and flanking the leader's diamond; flight three configured the same but opposite two flight and, 100-150 feet lower than the leader's group. Flight four was "Tail-End Charlie," highest of all the flights and trailing behind, responsible for protecting the squadron from stern attacks. Route formations afforded maximum vision, concentration of firepower, and critically on long flights, ease of flying. Group missions simply reproduced squadron formations, substituting whole sixteen-ship squadrons for flights.

After rendezvousing with the bombers the 475th took up escort positions anywhere from fifty to twenty-five miles from the target. Bomber altitudes varied with target and weather conditions but usually flew at 15,000 to 20,000 feet. On Mission 7 McGuire's 431st Squadron flew point, a vanguard position 5,000 feet lower than the main force and a distance ahead. Theirs was a spoiling mission, to report enemy defenses, trigger any aerial ambushes, or at least force defending enemy interceptors to commit to combat at lower altitudes. Behind them the B-25s flew on, a squadron of P-38s now on each flank 2,000 to 5,000 feet higher, with wingmen spread wider now and slightly trailing their leaders, poised to follow them in attack. The entire mass had cover from the trailing high squadron that protected all from attacks from the rear and broke up Japanese thrusts from above.

475th FG, 431st Squadron Pilots, Dobadura New Guinea Nov. '43
Front: Allen, Hawthorne, Kidd, O'Brien, Cortner, Tilley, Donald, Houseworth, McGuire, Ekdahl, Champlin, Jett, Crosswait, Lent, Dawson, Beneviet, Conn
Back: Jones, Zehring, Viet, DuMontier, Morris, Weldon, Herman, Reigle, Ballard, Clodfelter, Monk, Pappy Cline, Cooper -Intel. officer

At 0945 the Hades Squadron swept over Wewak first and was immediately jumped by Navy Zeroes. McGuire's flight provided rear coverage but counted only three aircraft having sent the fourth limping home with mechanical problems. At 8,000 feet a Zero rolled in for a diving pass forty-five degrees off the front. With its deadly gun package, Mac confidently turned his P-38 head-on into the attack. The fighters passed.

(next page)

Major McGuire with his crewmen
at Hollandia Strip, Ducth New Guinea, June 1944
Left: Richard Van Der Geest Right: Frank Kish

McGuire and the 475th (continued)

Nicely judging his timing McGuire reefed his mount around and fired two long bursts that torched the Zero, sending it down.

Meanwhile McGuire's wingman, future ace Lieutenant Francis I. Lent, called for help; another Zero had latched onto his tail and they swept through space in a deadly game of tag. McGuire located his hapless comrade and drove the enemy off with several bursts. Again teamed up, Mac went into a left-hand circuit, spotted another Zero and attacked. With Lent faithfully guarding him, McGuire chased the frantically twisting fighter towards the waiting flak at Dagua, getting off several shots until one burst scattered tiny sparks of bullet strikes all around the Zero's canopy. As he broke off, Lent reported seeing the Navy craft nose down and crash in flames. Number two.

Lent, McGuire, MacDonald, Loisel.

Tommy McGuire

Pulling up and away, McGuire and Lent made another head-on attack on a Zeke (the Allied code name for a Zero) but the Japanese steadfastly held a collision course despite exchanges of fire linking the two approaching craft. A split second before impact, Mac dove beneath the onrushing fighter, both feeling and seeing their left wings brush in passing. Together leader and wingman closed on another Zero over the sea off the end of Dagua's runway but it escaped and the two retired, the light and heavy ack-ack described as "intense".

Engaging yet another Zeke that attempted to outclimb the Lightnings, Lent bore in, hammering pieces off the stumbling fighter until it exploded in midair. Low on fuel and ammunition, McGuire and Lent cautiously withdrew from the violence surrounding Wewak. As three Mitchells turned off their bomb runs, the two P-38s fell into escort positions for the trip home.

Ten minutes out of the target area a fast, inline-engine fighter pounced on the formation. It was the best Japanese Army fighter produced thus far in the war, Kawasaki's Ki-61 *Hien* or Swallow. Upon its combat introduction in New Guinea five months earlier, the sleek fighter sported a copy one of the world's best liquid-cooled engines, the DaimlerBenz twelve cylinder DB60l-A. Faster and heavier but less handy than Zeroes and Oscars, its arms still lacked punch with the standard twin 7.7 millimeter machine-guns and two 20 millimeter cannons or 12.7 millimeter machine-guns. The Allies code named it "Tony" and did not underestimate its strength.

McGuire noted the Tony "appeared quite fast," the mottled green, yellow, and brown fighter starting a pass at the B-25s but the P-38s turned into his attack. McGuire fired short, economical bursts, hits splashing the sleek fighter until it fell off smoking, the bomber boys later confirming its crash into the ocean. After topping off tanks at Marilinan, McGuire flew home to Moresby. A three-victory start marked his, and the 475th's, rise to greatness in the SW Pacific Area.

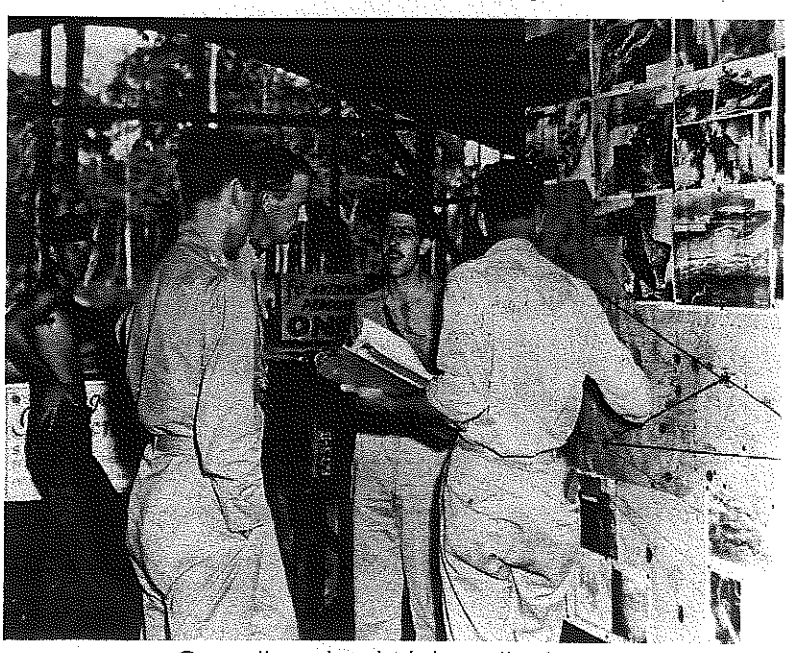
Ronald W. Yoshino
LIGHTNING STRIKES

Lindbergh Teaches His Lessons

MacArthur and Kenney had been persuaded to allow Lindbergh back on combat missions. He had convinced them that the more he learned of actual operational problems,the more he could pass on in terms of his expertise. On July 16, 1944 he landed in a P-47 that he agreed to ferry to Owi Island.

Four days later Lindbergh and Colonel Morrissey were waiting in the morning at the end of the strip in their P-38s for Colonels MacDonald and Smith. At precisely 10:00 the pair of them buzzed their waiting comrades on the strip below, and Lindbergh and Morrissey were off to join them.

Lindbergh and McGuire
briefing before or after a mission



Operations shack data gathering

The sweep covered the southern part of the bird's beak on southwestern part of the Vogelkop.

Several barges and buildings were strafed by MacDonald and Smith, but no other significant action was encountered from the arc of the flight that covered the distance from the Pisang Islands to Fakfak, and as far south as Ceram.

By the latter part of July the value of Lindbergh's lessons on fuel economy was beginning to take effect in the *475th.* Weather was always an unknown factor in New Guinea: air navigation and some operational losses were attributed to this cause. For example, on July 28 Lieutenant Bill Elliot was returning from Noemfoor to Biak when he radioed that his P38 had only five minutes of fuel left and that he was going to ditch into the sea. The weather had been troublesome all along the route and may have been the cause of Elliot's forced landing and loss.

Other pilots found that Lindbergh's technique gave them much more latitude in skirting or enduring adverse weather. More pilots began to realize that the P-38 could overcome virtually all obstacles that weather could present, the twinengine fighter seemingly possessing an unlimited flight endurance. Undoubtedly, fewer of the group's P-38s would have been lost on Black Sunday

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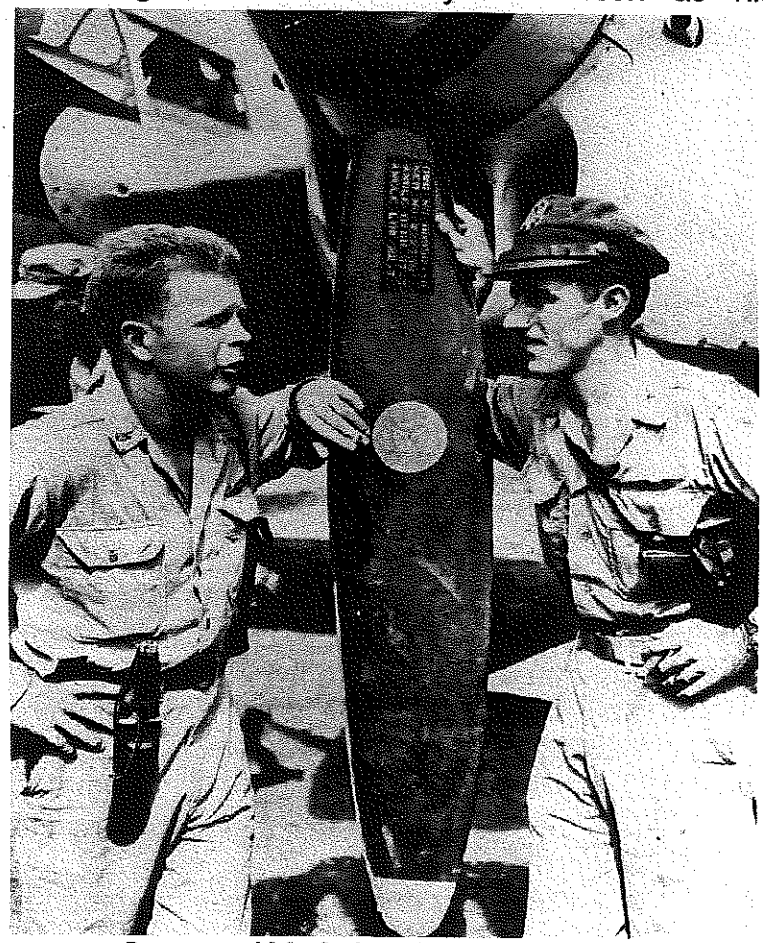
McGuire and Bong

Ace Race

On November 10, 1944, both Bong and McGuire each shot down an Oscar. For McGuire it finally meant that he went into the select group of American fighter aces who claimed twenty-six or more aerial victories. For Bong it was an added margin to insure that he would always be the American ranking ace.

By the first week of December Bong had moved from his old 49th Fighter Group to the *475th* Group. General Kenney always claimed that he kept the two aces together because they wanted to fly together and the public relations aspect was priceless. In truth, McGuire was frustrated by Bong's consistent hold on the status of ranking ace and provoked him mercilessly. At some point the usual calm exterior presented by Bong was fractured and he summarily moved out of the quarters that he shared with McGuire.



Bong and McGuire December 1944

December 7, 1944 was the day that an American landing was made at Ormoc Bay to break the stalemate caused by stubborn Japanese resistance on Leyte. Particularly savage air battles developed throughout the day and the fighters of the Fifth Air Force claimed over fifty Japanese aircraft for the loss of a single pilot.

McGuire had scored earlier in the day when he and Major Jack Rittmayer went out on a two-man sweep as Daddy Green Flight. (The 431st had changed its call sign from Hades to Daddy by this time.) With twenty-nine confirmed victories to his credit, McGuire was trailing Bong's thirty-six by seven.

A little after two o'clock in the afternoon Daddy Green Flight was off again, this time with Dick Bong as Daddy Green Three and Lt. Floyd Fulkerson as his wingman, Daddy Green Four. The mission was a convoy patrol south of Ormoc, but the weather was so bad that the four P-38s were stationed northwest of the convoy at 4,000 ft. Bong was the first to call out the enemy when he sighted a Sally bomber at five minutes after three. Once again McGuire was frustrated in trying to locate the enemy, so Bong gave chase and shot the Sally down on the northeastern tip of Bohol Island. Once again Bong was ahead by eight with the destruction of his thirty-seventh Japanese aircraft.

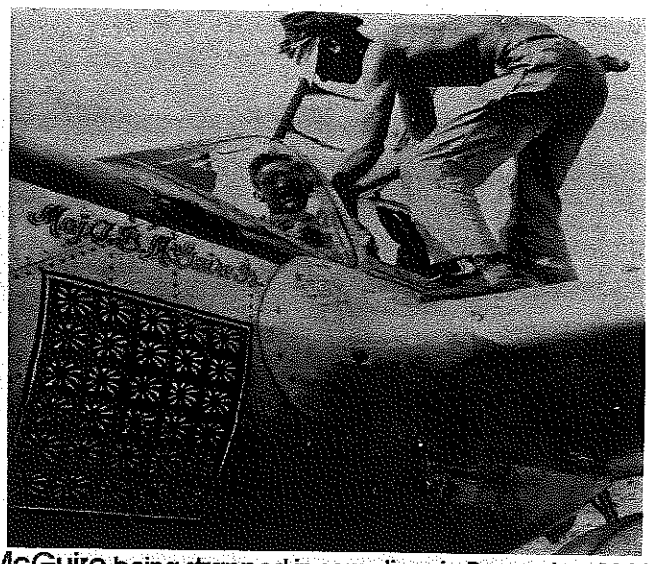
McGuire resumed the patrol with an urgency borne of his desire to overtake Bong's score. About half an hour later he attacked a Japanese divebomber and pressed the attack until he was driven off by flak from friendly ships below. Jack Rittmayer was able to get behind the divebomber and shoot it down.

About thirty minutes after that, McGuire sighted five Tojos coming in at 2,500 feet from the north, just under the overcast. McGuire again went through friendly antiaircraft fire, but this time he pressed on and shot at the left side Tojo until it crashed just short of the convoy.

(continued on page15)

McGuire as Flight Leader

December 26,1944 did not begin as an unusual day on the air base at Dulag. Tom McGuire would once again lead the 431st Squadron as Daddy Red One. His wingman would be Captain Ed Weaver, Fred Champlin would lead Daddy White Flight and John Tilley would bring up the rear with a two-man Daddy Blue Flight, Lt. Bo Reeves flying as his tail-end Charlie wingman.



McGuire being strapped in sometime in December 1944
The notorious battered cap is being held on the head of the crewman who is believed to be Crewchief Richard Van Der Geest

Ten 431st P-38s were off the ground by ten minutes after eight and rendezvoused with the B-24s over Masbate Island at nine o clock. There was no incident throughout the run to the target while the 431st P-38s shepherded the bombers at an altitude of 16,000 feet, somewhat above and to the right of them.

While the bombers were heading away from the target McGuire saw five Zeros coming down on the rear of the formation from out of the overcast. The P-38 ace lost no time in diving after the enemy interceptors and got behind one that was pressing home his attack rather than breaking away. A single 45 degree deflection shot from about 400 yards away made a direct hit on the cockpit. The Zero continued to drive on the tail of a B-24 and McGuire closed to within thirty yards to fire another burst. Weaver saw this Zero explode.

McGuire happened to be in the heart of the enemy interception and took advantage of the opportunity. Weaver managed to stay with the wild-flying McGuire and saw him take another shot at a Zero with about 60 degree deflection which flamed the Japanese fighter. Three more Zeros came in to join the fight and McGuire got another good 45 degree deflection shot that sent one of them crashing into a dry stream bed.

Lt. Christopher Herman was leading McGuire's second element and having a hard time following McGuire while shaking Zeros off his own tail, but managed to see this third victory catch fire and crash. McGuire had by this time lost Weaver, although Herman was able at least to keep his flight leader in sight. He was able to confirm McGuire's fourth claim of the day when the ace chased yet one more Zero into a dive and made another remarkable deflection shot to send his target burning and crashing near the same dry stream.

With his steam now definitely up, McGuire found a Tojo in the distance and was excited at the prospect of getting five kills in one combat. He went after the Japanese fighter, which was now climbing for the protection of the overcast. Other P38s were slipping down from above to give McGuire some competition for his prey. Lt. Sammy Pierce was a member of the 8th Fighter Squadron flight that happened to be in the same area when McGuire started after the Tojo. He watched in mocking disapproval while McGuire and every other P-38 pilot who tried to get the enemy plane muff one firing pass after another. The Tojo would be in the clouds before any of the overeager Americans who seemed to be climbing over one another could make a decent shot.

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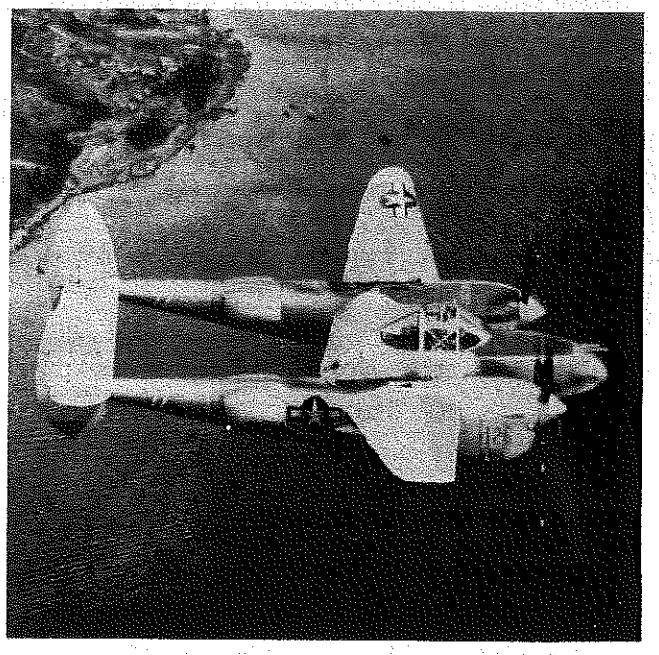
John Tilley in the cockpit at Leyte.
He flew McGuire's wing during the last of 1944

McGuire Shot Down Over Water



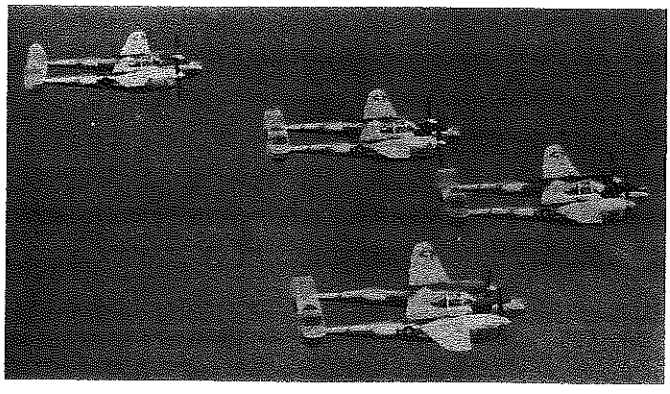
In recalling the events of **October 17, 1943** McGuire wrote in his **combat report**, "We were at 23,000 feet when we sighted the enemy at a position of 11 o'clock, slightly above us (a group of 15 to 20 Zekes). After we dropped our belly tanks, Lieutenant Kirby, in his capacity as squadron leader that day, led us in to a head-on attack, climbing slightly. I selected one Zeke at the right of the formation and began firing. He started smoking and rolled out and down to his right. I followed, firing intermittently, to 18,000 feet, then pulled back to rejoin our formation."

"I lost my second element and my wingman by this time. My wingman could only drop one belly tank, and because of this could not pull out of his dive until he reached 4,000 feet. He saw the Zeke that I had fired on going straight down, still smoking. I pulled up behind Red Flight at 21,000 feet and arrived in time to see two Zekes attacking from a position of 4 o'clock high. After I had fired at them in an attempt to drive them away, four other Zekes started down on me from 6 o'clock high, forcing me to dive to about 1,000 feet."

"I had begun a climb when I sighted two Zekes at 3 o'clock and about 1,000 fee below me. I dived to attack, getting several shots with no results observed. I was at 18,000 feet when three Zekes from 8 o'clock high attacked me. As I was diving out, one closed in to very close range, putting about two slugs into the cockpit and possibly other parts of the ship. My evasive maneuver in this instance was to increase my dive to vertical, diving to 7,000 feet, then pulling back up to 12,000 feet."

"At that time I saw seven Zekes in a loose formation and to the rear of a P-38, which appeared to be in trouble. As one Zeke began his pass at the P-38, I made my attack on him at 90-degree deflection. I fired a long burst and saw him break into flame. Feeling that I could distract them from the P-38 by making an attack, I pulled up slightly and to the right, getting a direct tail shot. I closed to about 100 feet and began firing. The Zeke immediately started burning and rolled slowly to the left and down. The remaining Zekes attacked and hit me at that time."

"One was about 100 feet behind me and closing. As I started to dive out, my left engine began to burn, my right engine was smoking, a cannon shell burst into the radio compartment, and a 7.7 shell hit my wrist and passed into the instrument panel. Other shells hit at the base of the control column. I received shrapnel in my right arm and my hips. I tried to pull out of my dive, but found my elevator controls were entirely useless. I then released my escape hatch and bailed out. I landed in the sea about 25 miles from shore and remained there for approximately 30 minutes. I was unable to inflate my life raft due to shrapnel holes in it. I was picked up by a Navy PT boat, No. 152, and carried to PT tender Hilo in Buna Bay. During the engagement I saw at least 30 enemy fighters and clusters of bombs that had been dropped about 28 miles offshore."



McGuire's Last Battle

"On individual combat tactics," he told other pilots, "aggressiveness is the keynote of success. A fighter pilot must be aggressive. The enemy on the defensive gives you the advantage, as he is trying to evade you, and not to shoot you down. Never break your formation into less than two-ship elements. Stay in pairs. A man by himself is a liability, a two-ship team an asset. If you are separated, join up immediately with other friendly airplanes. On the defensive, keep up your speed. A shallow, high-speed dive or climb is your best evasive action against a stern attack. You must never reverse your turn; that is asking for it. Try to make the Jap commit himself, then turn into his attack.

"At minimum range your shots count and there is less chance of missing your target. On deflection shots, pull your sight through the Nip. Most shots in deflection are missed by being over or under rather than through incorrect lead.

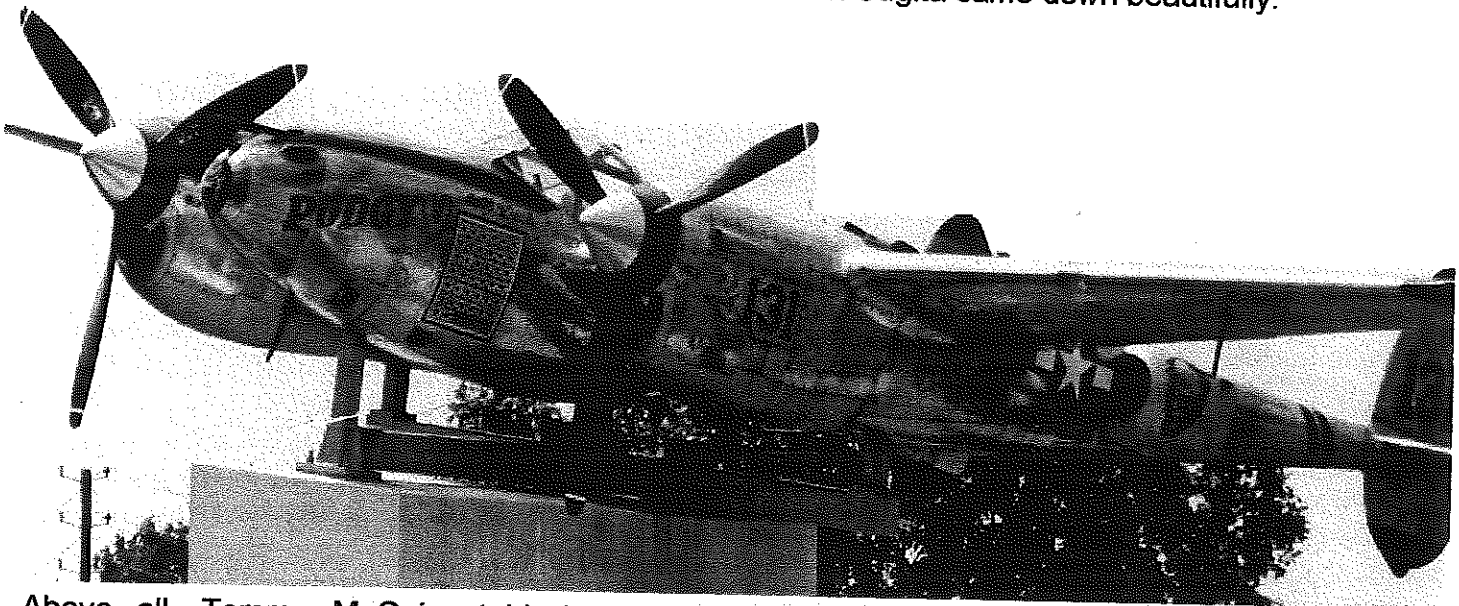
"Always clear yourself before and during an attack. It is always the one you don't see that gets you. On long-range missions especially don't chase a single out of the fight; he is probably trying to lure you away from the scrap. Your job is to provide cover for the bombers."

On January 6, 1945, General Kenney received news of Dick Bong's safe return to the United States. He told McGuire he was now free to return to combat.

The next morning McGuire roared off his home field with three other P-38s close behind. The Lightnings each carried two 160-gallon tanks beneath their wings. McGuire set his course for Los Negros Island where there was a Japanese fighter strip. His plan was to come in at 2,000 feet, and be in a perfect position to bounce any fighters taking off. Near their objective the Lightnings went in low, beneath a deck of broken clouds above them.

It happened without the slightest warning. Tracers flashed past the P-38s. ***A single Zero*** whipped from the clouds in a classic bounce, a swift, shallow dive, counting on surprise and audacity to catch the Lightnings unawares. In this move the Japanese pilot succeeded.

What no one knew until well after the war (when records were examined and the Japanese pilots interviewed) was that the man flying the Zero was one of Japan's greatest fighter pilots, Shoichi Sugita, who reached a score of some eighty kills before he met his own death Sugita came down beautifully.



PUDGY

Above all, Tommy McGuire told the other pilots, there are three cardinal rules for men flying the P38:

1. Never attempt combat at low altitude.
2. Never let your airspeed fall below 300 miles per hour because at 300 mph or better the ailerons of the Zero become extremely hard to move and their maneuverability suffers.
3. Never keep your wing tanks in a fight.

Only the combat experience of McGuire saved the moment as Sugita opened fire. Immediately, McGuire broke into a vertical bank, coming around in a steep turn, calling for the other pilots to do the same. The four P-38s slid into a Lufberry Circle, snaring Sugita inside.

Any other pilot would have been boxed in, caught, unable to excape. Sugita was no ordinary man at the controls. He broke sharply to the left to get out of the trap, but McGuire kept the P-38s grinding around (see page 17)

Frank Nichols (final page)

McGuire had taken it anyway, knowing that a maximum effort was important to protect our forces. I was glad McGuire had survived but I was upset that he had taken my plane. The next morning I headed to the hospital where I planned to ream him out real good.

I learned that McGuire had been repeating over and over, "My God, Major Nichols is really going to be mad at me for losing his plane." He was right, but he had broken ribs, shrapnel wounds, severe burns and his eyes were blood shot, and when I saw how badly he was injured I could only console him. I told him how proud I was of him for shooting down the Japanese planes and surviving. I said, "To hell with it, I don't care about the airplane." Of course I was lying about the airplane but it made him feel better.

I was convinced this was his last combat mission and he would not fly combat for a long time, if ever. In fact, when I left in a few days for my trip home to join my wife in San Antonio, I met Tommy's wife, Marilynn, for the first time and I assured her that he would never fly combat again. I told her I was sure he would be coming home after his recovery. How wrong I was and how mistaken I was with his motivation to remain and fight the war to its very end. He would be one in a million and my hero.

I will never forget the last conversation we had when I visited Mac at Hollandia. I was a Lieutenant Colonel with the Fifth Fighter Command and he was now a Major and the Squadron Commander of the 431st Fighter Squadron. He told me, "Colonel Nichols, I remember when we started out in Brisbane last year, you had a goal to make the 431st the best fighter squadron in the Army Air Force. My goal is the same as yours." He gave his life making that goal possible.

Major General Franklin A. Nichols,
USAF (Ret)

article from the book by

Charles Martin

THE LAST GREAT ACE

Lindbergh (final page)

if the fuel-saving procedures had been implemented earlier.

From all accounts, it is clear that the pilots of the 475th took Lindbergh to their hearts and considered him one of their own. In return he considered them rough hewn, for the most part, and criticized them for their shock-troop appearance, bawdy decorations on their P-38s and especially for their brutal attitude toward the enemy.

One of the pilots that Lindbergh spent a great deal of time with was Major Tom McGuire. Much has been made in written accounts of the fact that McGuire persistently taunted Lindbergh and made him do small favors, knowing full well that Lindbergh could not effectively retaliate because of his tenuous guest status. Other 475th people claim that the bantering between the two men was mutual and generally good natured.

Lindbergh was an incorrigible practical joker who enjoyed putting a mild stunt to the unsuspecting. One rumored turnabout that he is supposed to have dealt to McGuire is said to have happened when McGuire casually requested him to retrieve the ace's famous battered service hat. Lindbergh apparently hastened off and later returned with a second lieutenant's flight cap about *three sizes too big*.

John Stanaway
POSSUM, CLOVER & HADES

Lindbergh and McGuire
getting ready for a mission

McGuire and Bong (continued from page 10)

Another Tojo was shot down by Fulkerson who watched his victim explode violently over a formation of LSTs. McGuire and Fulkerson witnessed Bong make a head on pass at another Tojo that was mortally hit and crashed into the water.

Now it was thirty victories for McGuire, but Bong still led with thirty eight. McGuire reformed the flight and set out on patrol once again. The controller vectored Daddy Green Flight over a damaged destroyer where a single Oscar was observed at about 6.000 feet. Daddy Green gave chase to get the lone Japanese fighter, but Daddy White Flight came into the action and stole the victory away.

Fred Champlin was leading Daddy White with Lt. Tom "Pepper" Martin on his wing. Lt. Enrique Provencio was flying Daddy White Three with Lt. Ken Hart bringing up the rear. Champlin and Provencio had already shot down one Zero each, and Hart was ready to claim his fifth when Daddy,White Three and Four became separated from the flight and moved in on Daddy Green's prey.

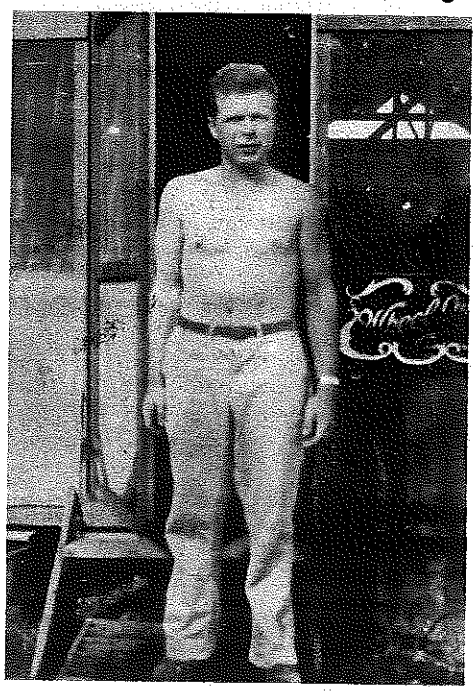
Hart got into position when the Oscar was flying to the southwest at 6,000 feet. With a short deflection shot from the rear, Hart saw a flash of flame on the right side of the engine and the Oscar rolled over to crash east of Olango Island. With three other victories scored on November 24, plus one scored on December 2, Hart was now an ace. He added another Oscar during the December 7 patrol to make it an even six.

The 475th had claimed twenty-six victories on December 7, 1944 to surpass the 450th confirmed claim since it had started operations in August 1943. It also suffered the only command loss of a pilot when Lt. Colonel Meryl M. Smith did not return from his last combat mission.

Colonel MacDonald had taken off with Colonel Smith as his wingman for their first mission at 11:15 in the morning. They meant to join up with Clover White Flight, but contacted three Jacks first. The two P-38 aces immediately took the advantage and shot down two of the Japanese very quickly.

MacDonald got into a wild dogfight with the third enemy plane and Smith got in a good shot to relieve his leader by sending the Jack down in flames. The P-38s patrolled until a few minutes after twelve and returned to Dulag.

About two hours later MacDonald led another patrol with Lt. Leo Blakely as his wingman and Smith leading the second element. They were over western Leyte when a number of fighter identified as Jacks jumped them from the rear. MacDonald again turned the fight to the American advantage by turning into the attack. One of the Jacks fell to MacDonald and another to Blakely.



Dick Bong
by the Wheel Inn Barracks during his stay with the 431st when he scored his final four victories.

Another Jack was on a firing pass at one of the P-38s, but Macdonald was able to get a good angle and shot most of the enemy's tail off, sending it tumbling into the water. Other Japanese fighters joined in the fight, but didn't manage much other than to get one of their number shot down by Blakely.

Sometime during the fight Smith was attacked by two Jacks (or Georges of the Air Group 341). His P-38 was last seen heading for Ponson Island, away from the protection of his flight. Some damage from enemy fire was seen on his plane before he disappeared with Japanese fighters after him. With nine victories to his credit and a tour as group commander as well as yeoman service in various other positions in the 475th, Smith was a serious loss, indeed.

The ace race between Bong and McGuire went into a brief decline after the middle of December.

(see next page)

Bong (final page)

Pete Madison
flew McGuire's wing on many missions
Chairman of the board - 475th FG Historical Association

McGuire and Lt. "Pete" Madison were on a sweep over Negros Island when McGuire got a full-deflection shot that shot down a Jack (or Frank, which type was also based in the area) for his thirty-first kill. After that date, McGuire is listed as being out of action with one of the serious diseases that he and most veterans of the southwest Pacific contracted.

Bong quickly raised his score to forty confirmed aerial victories by December 17. He was finally ordered out of combat and was on his way home by the end of the month. McGuire's boiling point would reach its zenith at the same time.

****

By the end of 1944, Dick Bong was on his way home as the leading American fighter ace of all time. He had scored five of his victories with the Satan's Angels and had left a permanent mark on the history of the group.

Tom McGuire both resented and admired Bong. He was determined to wrest the title from his rival, but also realized that the time was short. Fatigue and the effects of tropical illnesses would soon end the combat career of this fearless ace. Whatever he did would have to be done soon and McGuire was pushing the issue to the limit.

John Stanaway
POSSUM, CLOVER & HADES

Flight Leader (final page)

When the Tojo seemed to be just about able to make the safety of the sheltering mist, Pierce shook his head and fired one good burst in a dive from his position above, and sent the fighter down in flames. Major McGuire filled the air with the rudest suggestions about the virtueless thief from the 8th Squadron, but Pierce went home satisfied; he now also had four victories for the mission.

Three other 431st Squadron pilots scored during the mission. John Tilley chased one Zero through clouds over the tops of some mountains and finally shot it to pieces over the west coast of Luzon and watched it crash for his fifth confirmed kill. He also saw Fred Champlin shoot down a Zero for his ninth kill. "Bo" Reeves shot down a Zero three miles south of Clark, witnessed by Champlin at the same time.

Captain Jack Fisk was leading two flights of 433rd Squadron P-38s over Clark when he saw McGuire's flight engaging the Zeros about a thousand feet above. Possum Red One (Fisk) led his own and Possum White Flight up into the battle.

Unfortunately, Fisk had trouble with his engines and by the time he got them running properly White Flight called out an attack from the rear. Fisk turned into this aggressive Japanese fighter, which was identified as a Tojo, and convinced its pilot to break off and dive away. The American followed and got in some good hits around the cockpit. The Tojo went straight down and crashed just southeast of Clark strip number 5.

That mission ended the Satan's Angels scoring for the year. They had confirmed no fewer than ninety nine kills in December and the total now stood at 522.

John Stanaway
POSSUM, CLOVER & HADES

Last Battle (final page)

and around in the Lufberry. The formation with the Zero in its midst dropped down to only 200 feet above the trees, with Sugita still trying to break free without being caught in a crossfire.

There was no going lower. The P-38 formation scattered, flashing low over the trees.

It was a fatal mistake.

Before the Americans could counter the move, the Zero clawed around in an impossibly tight turn. Sugita wasted neither time nor motion in battle and he fastened onto the tail of a P-38. The pilot skidded and maneuvered frantically, but there was no getting away from Sugita in this kind of fighting.

The P-38 pilot shouted for help, and McGuire, unthinking, responding to that plea, rushed to his aid.

At that moment Tommy McGuire violated not one, but all three of his cardinal rules of combat.

He was at minimum altitude.
His speed was well below 300 miles per hour.
He still had his heavy wing tanks—which, among other things, raised his stalling speed.

The big Lightning responded instantly to McGuire's bidding. Working hard rudder and full aileron, McGuire snapped the P-38 into a hard, vertical turn.

It was too tight and too steep for low speed, high drag and heavy weight. And there was no room below. The Lightning staggered suddenly as though it had rammed into an invisible wall in the sky.

No Japanese plane was near McGuire.

No Japanese gun or cannon fired at him.

But he had been snared by the inviolable laws of aerodynamics.

In that tight turn, the lift over his wings burbled. The smooth flow of air so critical to flight at his speed and in that maneuver swirled and eddied. Almost instantly the P-38 was into a high-speed stall.

There was only one way to go. The Lightning flipped crazily over on one wing, control wrested from its pilot. If he had altitude below him McGuire would have fallen, brought the fighter out of its plunge as he regained lift.

There wasn't room. The Lightning snapped over on her wing. Almost in the same instant it plunged into the jungle.

A blinding sheet of flame erupted through the trees.

Tommy McGuire was dead.

Carroll R. "Andy" Anderson

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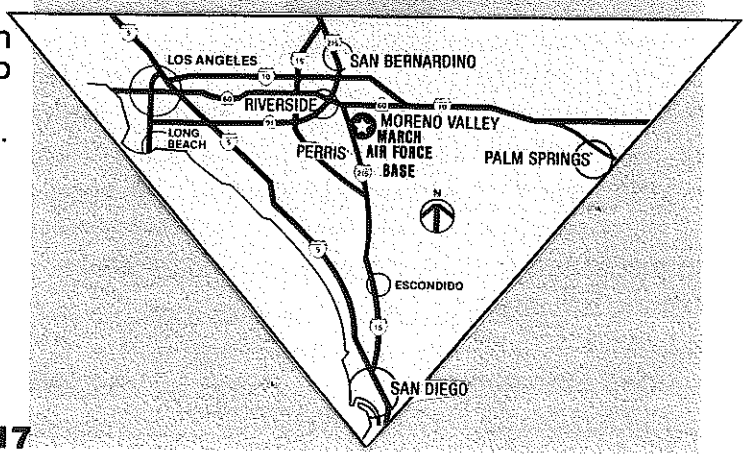

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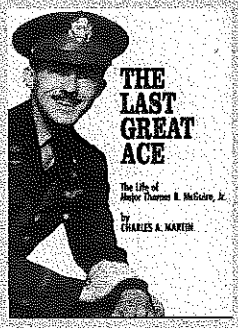

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