



The Steak and Eggs Special Of the 89th

By Dan O'Donnell

The Story

As you know, Dad flew on the Steak and Eggs Special, an A-20A made out of spare parts, one last time just before it crashed. He related the story to Mary so that it could be read at one of the reunions of the 89th. The story is reproduced below.

Last Days of the Steak and Eggs Special

By Gus "ADOD" O'Donnell

Ernie Nenneman and I had flown out to a base in New Guinea one day, giving an AP writer a ride, and as we were waiting for the plane to be refueled, we stood around talking. Ernie and I were both from Iowa, and had gotten friendly, so I told him about a girl in Australia I had met, and how I was thinking seriously about asking her to marry me. Ernie mentioned that the Steak and Eggs Special went to Sydney, Australia for extras like beer, phonograph records, and other treats, and that a different crew went along each time. "Keep me in mind next time you make a trip," I said casually.



Maj. Ernie Nenneman at the controls of, "Eight Ball."

Ernie was a busy guy, so I didn't really expect that I'd get on the Special. Not too long after that, however, there was my name on the assignment board to go to Sydney with Steak and Eggs. George F. O'Neal was the pilot. "Have a little fun," the engineering chief told me. "Take some time for yourself if you get the chance." We got into that old A-20 Steak and Eggs and set out for the overnight trip to Sydney.

The flight over was serene, with the Pacific below and, over the radio, the song from *Casablanca*, "As Time Goes By." We flew into Sydney on a rainy day, and as we passed the Sydney Bridge it seemed we were the only plane around for miles.

At the Mascot Aerodrome the permanent personnel chocked our wheels. As soon as I could I checked into the Haymarket Hotel, a cheap but clean place, and I called my girl. George and I had to spend some time that night getting our ship ready for the return trip the next day, as well as getting the supplies we had come for, but we managed to get in some dancing and champagne in town.

It wasn't until the next day that the blow fell - my girl told me she'd been seeing someone else, and it was all over for us. Sadly, I went back to the ship to help load our cargo.

We had two passengers along for the return trip, a nurse and a Marine major, the major covered with a poncho against the rain. He sat in back over the tunnel door, while the nurse settled on the deck behind the pilot. Disappointed in my girl, with champagne fumes still bubbling in my head, I settled down for the long trip back to New Guinea.

Then O'Neal's voice crackled over the intercom. "O'Donnell! Were losing power from the right engine, and the oil pressures dropping," he said. "See if you can check it out."

I looked out. Oil was pouring out of the right engine over the cowling and nacelle at a great rate, and I wasn't surprised when O'Neal called again to say the oil pressure was dropping pretty fast. "We need to set down somewhere," I told him.

"Where?"

"Somewhere close."

We headed back toward Sydney. I thought about the sharks we had heard about outside Sydney Harbor, and tried to plan how we could get the nurse and the major out and still get out ourselves, along with our life raft and the two Mae Wests we carried.

Once again we passed Sydney Bridge through a thick, misting rain, hoping that both engines would keep going until we made it to Mascot at last and started down. On the approach, the wheels were down and the engines were low, when suddenly O'Neal threw the engines wide open. We were coming in too slow, and had to come around again. Finally we were on the ground, with the personnel chocking the wheels after we had taxied over to the parking area near the tower.

I got out and started to work on the engine. Oil was still leaking out through a crack in the oil cooler, and I could see that the ring and cowling were burned. I told the major it would be at least tomorrow before we could leave. That was the only time one of my planes had to abort. Once again I checked into the Haymarket Hotel.

The next day I resumed work, installing a new oil cooler, with the help of two of the civilian mechanics from the Aerodromes permanent crew, who said they were called Bill and 'Arry. After the oil cooler was replaced, we started the engine up for its pre-flight test. Smoke poured out all over the engine.

We found that the number one cylinder wasn't firing, and there was no compression in any of the other cylinders either. The nearest replacement cylinder was in Brisbane, so we sent for it and settled in for a few more days. The major and the nurse, needless to say, found another ride.

Unfortunately, the new cylinder didn't help. We discovered the entire engine was burned out and would have to be replaced - from Hawaii Air Depot. It was going to take two or three weeks for it to arrive, so we covered the ship with canvas and left it parked next to the tower.

Some of my wait was spent on Sydney beach, but when I needed to go to the Aerodrome I called the military motor pool, where one of the drivers was a beautiful blonde. But at last the engine arrived and was installed. Since O'Neal had gone back to New Guinea, I asked for a test pilot to give it a test hop. "Stick around tomorrow," the master sergeant at the Aerodrome told me. "The Third Group commander is coming in from New Guinea tomorrow."

By now it had been nearly six weeks since I had set out on Steak and Eggs for an overnight stay in Sydney. I got word that I was going to get jumped on for spending that much time in Australia, when I should have been back in New Guinea.

When the B-25, "Fat Cat," rolled in the next day, I was there, ready to go. The Fat Cat pulled in next to the Steak and Eggs, and I stood at attention, waiting to be pounced on by Colonel Jock Henebry.

Henebry emerged from the ship and marched over to me. "Who are you, soldier?" he demanded. "Is O'Donnell here?"

"Tech Sergeant Augustine D. O'Donnell reporting, sir!" I replied, trying not to quake.

"What's the story on this airplane?" the Colonel barked.

I gave it to him. "This plane was out of commission for about four weeks, sir. First we landed here from New Guinea, then when we took off to return, we aborted due to oil pressure falling in the right engine. We replaced the oil cooler that was causing the problem, and then the number one cylinder blew and was replaced after a long wait. During pre-flight testing, the right engine lost compression on all cylinders, so we had to get a new engine delivered from Hawaii Air Depot. That took at least two weeks, sir."

The Colonel blinked. "Well, is it ready to go NOW?"

I looked him straight in the eye. "Yes, sir! Were waiting for a test hop, but it should be ready to take us all the way back home."

"All right! Get back up there - were leaving tomorrow."



*Col. Jock Henebry seated on the left.
(Courtesy of M. Claringbould, from his web site)*

So, my overnight stay ended at last. A couple of pilots already in Sydney rode back with us, one of whom sat back with me and rejoiced all the way that he was going home.

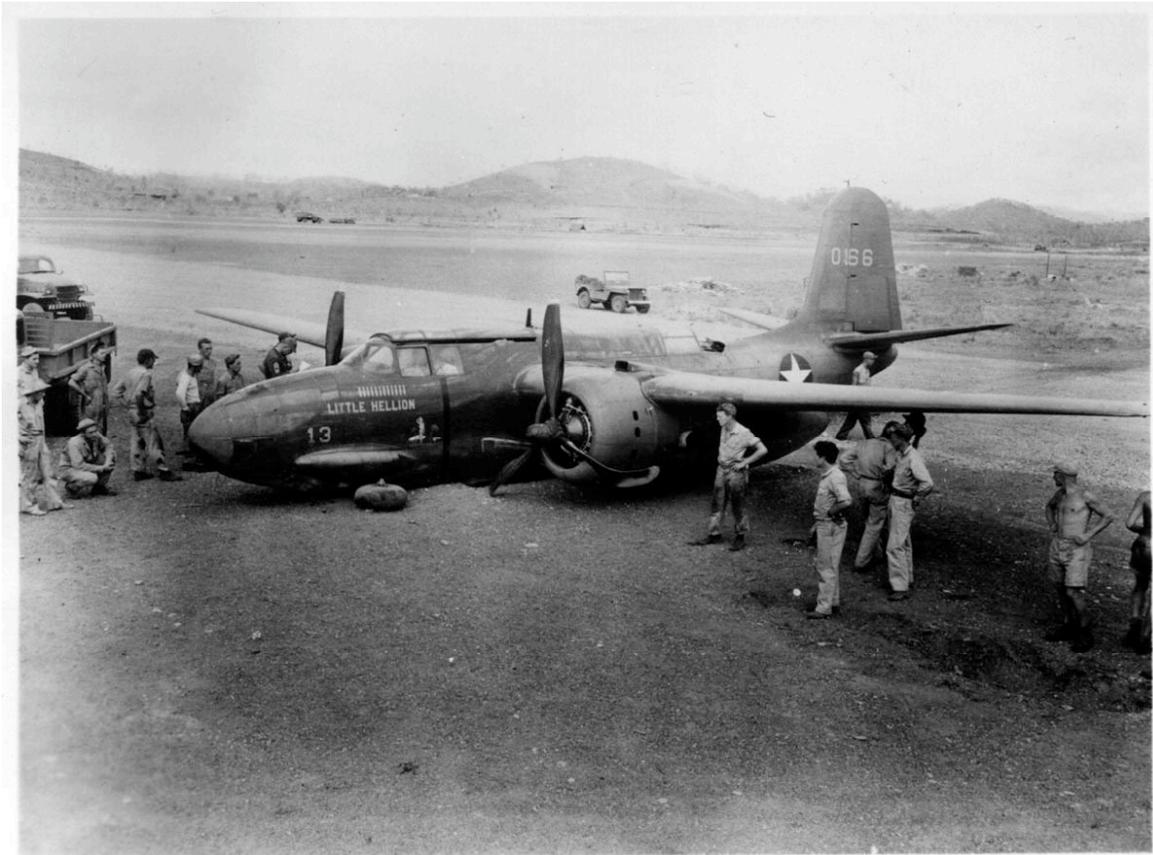
Back in New Guinea, the engineering chief called me over. "When you left," he said, "I know I told you to take some time off if you got the chance. But O'Donnell," he roared, "this is ridiculous!"

The Plane

The main part of the Steak and Eggs was adapted from the wreck of the Little Hellion (ser. # 40-166), an A-20A that had, "bellied in," at 7 mile field (so named because it was 7 miles from Port Moresby) on November 1, 1942 with a Lt. Ford at the controls.

The other plane used in the creation of the Steak and Eggs was "Yellow Fever." Somehow the fuselage from Little Hellion and the wing assemblies from Yellow Fever were moved to the revetment site, propped up on some empty oil drums, and the work began.

The conditions in the jungle were miserable. Harris Ward, a friend of Dad's and an engineer in the 89th, writes, "We stayed in tents at most locations and had to use mosquito nets. We would get in the sack, tuck the mosquito net in good so no mosquito could get in and then, with a flashlight proceed to mash all the mosquitoes inside the net against the net. If you didn't get every mosquito they would get you and keep you from sleeping. You learned not to put your arm against the net while you slept."



The wreck of "Little Hellion" at 7 mile airstrip near Port Moresby, New Guinea, Nov. 1, 1942

Putting a plane together from two wrecks couldn't have been easy, but the lure of fresh food was strong, and the engineers had some time on their hands while the planes were out on a mission. Mr. Ward writes, "While at Dobodura it was decided to build a plane from the wrecks in the junk yard with our spare time. The plane would fly to Australia and bring back fresh vegetables, which we had not seen in some time. As I mentioned we did quite a bit of waiting and just loafing when we had nothing to do. A fuselage was obtained from 0166 that had made a belly landing, and had a fuselage that was not buckled. Inboard wing sections, with the landing gears and engine nacelles, were obtained from a plane that had a buckled fuselage from a nose wheel collapsing. New engines and props were obtained from Tech Supply. I guess you had to be a Squadron or Group Commander to arrange that. When the plane was finished it was named, "The Steak & Egg Special". No man was lost on the Special, according to an article in, "Altitude Minimum," the squadron book published in 1945. This includes the plane in its previous incarnations.



Ray DeSerio (left) and Harris Ward

Once the 89th started flying the Special to Australia on a regular basis, the other squadrons in the 3rd Group decided that they should have a plane of their own. But they took the easy way out, and simply took a plane out of combat. Harris writes, "The 13th or 90th or both did the same thing with a B-25. They named the B-25 "Fat Cat". They took one of their planes, in lieu of building a plane from the junkyard. I always wondered how someone explained the disappearance of a plane from combat status. Both planes made many flights to Australia doing the same thing, and both are in the Coral Sea." In, "The Forgotten Fifth," by Michael Claringbould, the author lists the Fat Cat as a B 25 in the 90th squadron. Dad mentions the Fat Cat in his story about the Steak and Eggs.

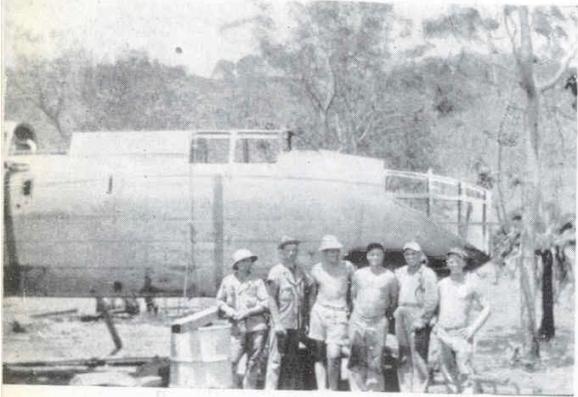
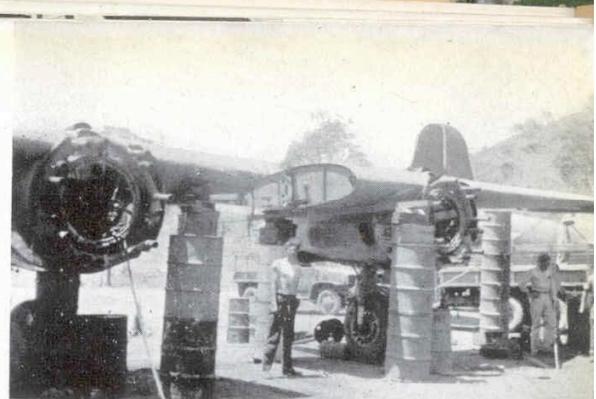
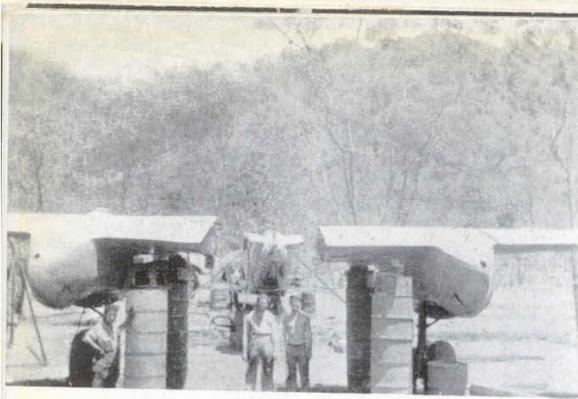
Although the fresh food and an opportunity for leave time in Sidney were welcomed, the Steak and Eggs did manage to cause some distress as well. On one occasion, it managed to do something the enemy never could: stop the 89th cold. As Harris Ward recalls: "On one of the early trips of "The Steak & Egg Special" they brought back enough fresh potatoes to feed the entire squadron. The cook decided to make potato salad. We knew about it and were really looking forward to this special lunch. A few unlucky fellows had to stay with the planes while everyone else went to lunch. The potato salad was so good it all disappeared and the men staying with the planes did not get any. They were unhappy until the first of many started to feel bad in the middle of the afternoon. By suppertime everyone was sick including all the pilots. The only men who were not sick were the men who did not have any potato salad. The cooks had left the potato salad stand in aluminum containers. The entire squadron was out of commission and no one could make it to the flight line the following day. I don't think we did much the second day either. I remember thinking and saying I had to get better to be able to die. I couldn't eat potato salad for many years after that."



Engineers of the 89th squadron. A. D. O'Donnell, back row, fifth from right.

The plane was finished on February 3, 1943, and christened by the squadron mess officer, Lt. Ocal P. Jones, with, appropriately enough, a raw egg. Its first flight to the mainland occurred on February 21st, and although some steaks were procured, the flight did not return with any eggs. On March 18th of the same year, the Steak and Eggs returned with its first shipment of liquid refreshment. The party that occurred the following night lives on in the memory of the surviving members of the 89th to this day! In August, the paint was removed from the plane, and its bare aluminum skin was polished. That plus the reduction in weight made the A-20 fast enough to fly formation with the fabled P-38 Lightnings!

The page from, "Altitude Minimum," on the Steak and Eggs is reproduced below.



STEAK AND EGGS

Her wings flapped on the takeoff, the plexiglass let in the weather and the rain, she was the tired spirit of a trio of retired combat ships—but she made that run between New Guinea and the mainland innumerable times, carrying the precious freight of meat and eggs and—morale.

“From beyond the dark and dismal horizon of lousy chow shall rise this winged carrier—” the first words of the impassioned dedication speech, given during the ceremonies held beneath the hot, impassive sun of New Guinea. The engineers had taken a wing here, a wheel there, to build Steak and Eggs, in defiance of the tech manuals which advised against originality. They completed the task, watched her go up on the first of the series of test-hops and saw the dark horizon light up with promise of an occasional meal of supplementary rations from the mainland.

She is gone to the Valhalla of all good ships, with her body at rest on an island off the mainland, clear of the surf of the Coral Sea. A good job, done again and again, and we are all grateful that no man went down with her.



The Insignia



Shortly before the crash of the Steak and Eggs Special on the shore of that remote island, the engineers took the time to strip the plane down to the bare metal and add new nose art. During the time it was in service, the Special went through several paint jobs before it got to the last one. Dick Hutchinson writes that the original paint job was a foliage green with the under belly painted a light gray. The nose art on the port side said simply, "The STEAK and EGG Special." Later, after the paint had been stripped, this was shortened to, "Steak and Eggs." Finally, they added the squadron insignia to give the plane its final form.



*A representation of the earliest version of The Steak and Eggs Special
(courtesy of Ray DeSerio)*



*The nose art as it appeared on The Steak and Eggs Special the day it crashed.
Note that the nose section has not been painted yet.*

The 89th squadron insignia was symbolic of the unique role the squadron and the A-20 played in the South Pacific. It had required special approval to be used officially and so Maj. Donal S. Good, commander of the squadron, wrote a letter to the commanding general, USAAF, on August 6, 1943. This means that the wreck must have occurred after that date. Colonel Henebry had assumed command of the 3rd group in November 1943. This further dates the wreck after that month. The full text of the letter follows:

**89TH ATTACK SQUADRON
3RD ATTACK GROUP**

APO 503,
6 August, 1943

SUBJECT: Approval of Squadron Insignia.

TO : Commanding General, USAF, Washington, D. C. THRU: Commanding Officer, 3rd Attack Group, APO 503.

1. Under the provisions of Section IV, paragraph 4, Circular Number 6, War Department, 1943, it is requested that the attached tentative squadron insignia be approved. In considering the request attention is invited to the fact that this squadron has been on foreign duty over eighteen months, in New Guinea one year, on three hundred combat missions (1236 sorties); and the only squadron in the 3rd Attach Group without a squadron insignia.
2. The meaning of the insignia: The background is blue and green, the squadron's official colors. These colors were assigned to the squadron to distinguish it and its material for overseas movement. Together, they portray the colors of coral formation as seen from the air; these coral formations are characteristic of the Southwest Pacific Area, our first theatre of combat operations. Separately, the blue signifies our air echelon and the green signifies our ground echelon. The trees are representative of the altitude at which we attack. The clouds, which provide concealment for approach and cover for withdrawal, are truly benevolent courtiers (sic) in the heavens for the attack aviator. The Air Forces attempt to combine the explosive carrying ability of bombardment with the speed, maneuverability, and strafing power of pursuit is most nearly realized in the Attack aircraft: the mechanized falcon with a three bladed propeller. This fast attacker, the like bird it represents, is ever ready at the wrist of the air arm for short, devastating sallies. What better description of attack aviation than the Webster's New International Dictionary (1931) definition of the falcon, ...Though some of the species are very small, and none are of more than medium size, they are very courageous and represent the highest type of birds of prey. The analogy of the fierce, zoological prototype of the attack aircraft is perfectly portrayed by the conventionalized falcon on a three-bladed propellor (sic). The parafrag bomb (the darling of destruction peculiar to attack aviation) is inserted because it was used for the first time in the history of combat by this squadron against the Japanese in New Guinea in World War II, and because it has been brought to a high degree of effectiveness through the efforts of this squadron. The red and yellow of the prop, the black of the falcon, and the white of the cloud blend with the squadrons colors to give the colors of the Third Attack Group, our parent organization.
3. To approve this insignia would greatly contribute to upholding the squadron's morale, since we would no loner be the only squadron in our group without an insignia.

DONAL S. GOOD
Major, Air Corp,
Commanding

1 Incl: Drawing (in dup.)



(As of this writing, Maj. Good is living in Issaquah, Washington near Seattle.)

The AP Writer



In Dad's story about the Steak and Eggs Special, he mentions ferrying an AP writer around with Maj. Ernie Nenneman just before his trip on the Special to Sidney. The following is the article written in 1943 by AP writer Vern Haugland about the 89th.

EIGHTY NINTH IMPRESSES A.P. WRITER

FIVE STORIES WRITTEN ON GROUP FOR RELEASE TO STATES NEWSPAPERS:

Vern Haugland, Associated Press correspondent, was deeply impressed by the records compiled by 3rd Group after he spent several days here recently. He wrote five articles about the Group for the hundreds of newspapers which receive the A.P. service. Among the articles was a detailed study of accomplishments of the 89th Squadron which we will reprint in three installments of the Third Strike.

Advanced Base Somewhere in New Guinea, June 18, 1943 (AP) -----

Based under the very noses of the Japanese subjected, in fact, to a Nip air raid every now and then --- is Americas most experienced squadron of attack planes.

The Japanese long ago must have learned the designation of the daring and accomplished unit. For that reason, perhaps army censors will permit the use of its name: the 89th Squadron in the Third Attack Group. If not, the reader may be told only that it is an A-20 Squadron activated as a reconnaissance unit at Savannah, Georgia, before the start of the war.

FIRST ATTACK ON LAE:

The squadron left the states a month and a half after Pearl Harbor. Until its planes arrived in the Southwest Pacific area in June 1942, its personnel served with medium bombardment outfits. After three months of training, the planes, outfitted with ---- caliber guns and bomb bay tanks made their first surprise attack on the Japanese at Lae, 175 miles north of Port Moresby, on August 31. And a real surprise it was, recalls Captain Donald E. Good of Eugene, Ore., who, then a second lieutenant, was one of the pilots taking part. The Japs hadn't experienced this type of intensive ground strafing and low-level bombing before, and they scurried from buildings like chickens at the cry of a hawk when the raids started. Radio Tokyo announced that one of the planes crashed into the sea. Actually, the crippled plane reached its base and did not have a crackup until six months later.

When war broke out, the Savannah outfit was the lone attack group in the country. It was thus the first to go overseas. The squadron has lost only three pilots in the greater part of a year of front-line flying. Only one was lost in combat. One crashed on takeoff and the other was lost flying from Australia to New Guinea.

SCORES HIT WITH BOMB BAY TANK:

Up to the end of May, the squadron had 1035 sorties, 232 missions and 1,937 combat hours to its credit. It has dropped 16,745 20-pound fragmentation bombs, 56 100-pound demolition bombs, and a number of 300 pounders for a bomb weight total of 442,430 pounds. In addition, the staunch old A-20s unintentionally dropped upon the Japs one bomb bay tank (loosened from faulty racks, it hit on enemy fuel dump at Lae and set it afire) and a camera and twin guns, which fell out when one plane somersaulted through antiaircraft fire. The planes expended 623,970 rounds of .30 caliber ammunition and 320,650 rounds of .50 caliber.

Battle-scarred old Cactus Don, oldest ship in the Squadron, had been on 69 missions by May 31, and had caulked up 562 hours of combat flying. Of the surviving A-20s, five had flown in combat more than 500 hours each and six more than 400 hours. It's the fighters and bombers that get most of the attention in this war, for shooting down Zeros and sinking ships. But the attack planes have some of the most difficult and dangerous assignments. The Bostons repeatedly have attacked New Guinea points, and bases in New Britain. They participated in the task of pushing back Japanese land forces over the Owen Stanley Range from an advanced to within 30 miles of Port Moresby.

Last September 9 they destroyed 17 Japanese aircraft on the ground at Buna. Their support of ground troops along the Kokoda Trail and in the Buna sector drew them an expression of thanks from Australian Infantry and a commendation from the Australian General in charge of allied ground forces. Indicative of

the potency of their attacks were 250 Japanese bodies discovered in one strafing area, a section which would have been extremely costly to clear out from the ground.

COMMENDED BY GENERAL WHITEHEAD:

The squadron flew nine missions in one day at Buna December 14. A week earlier, Dec. 6, six A-20's made 32 strafing passes. On another busy day three planes made 18 strafing passes. In the Battle of the Bismarck Sea in March the squadron's planes scored 12 hits on seven ships for the high bombing average of 60 per cent. Brig. Gen. Ennis C. Whitehead, air force commander in the field, commended the squadron for its part in the battle. Proving that they also can serve as fighters, the Bostons have shot down a Zero in aerial battle. They caught 12 enemy planes on the ground at Lae early in May 1943. Recently they have joined the B 25's in night attacks on barges and other enemy shipping along the northern coast of New Guinea. Every plane in the squadron has been holed by shrapnel and machine gun fire. Nine out of 11 of them were shot up in a single raid. Captain Good once received two direct hits from anti-aircraft fire over Lae, yet he flew 30 miles eastward along the coast to make a crash landing in water and come ashore in friendly territory.

Every pilot but one in the squadron has been decorated. Leading in awards is Lt. Edmund D. Montagano of Cleveland Heights, Ohio, former singer of Sammy Kaye's orchestra. He has received four medals. The attack group to which the squadron belongs has more than 500 medals to its credit. Since the famous 19th Bombardment Group was sent home, this has been the oldest group in the Southwest Pacific.

A front-line organization, the group has had to advance as the Japanese retreated. This has meant the building of new camps, with each move contributing to construction experience until now the boys can turn a jungle wilderness into a livable camp in remarkably rapid fashion.

STEAK N EGGS:

To provide the squadron with fresh foods from Australia, squadron mechanics built a plane out of spare parts from crashed up A-20s and other scrap in New Guineas war-made junk piles. Christened "Steak and Eggs," this flying mess kit makes regular trips to the main land. Captain Good said that principal credit for the fine showing of A-20's in this theater must go to the maintenance section. When the motors purr properly at takeoff their faces light up. They listen carefully and when something doesn't sound just right they fret and worry until the shop gets home and they can work on it some more.

LAUDS CAPTAIN ROBINSON:

"We have made more sorties than any other attack squadron and our planes have served well beyond the normal period. But they're still flying and they run more smoothly than they did when we were in the States. Our ground crews do work normally regarded as base maintenance rather than send the planes to a depot; that's why we've been able to keep an amazingly large number of planes in operation."

Good said the high quality of maintenance work was due in great part to the maintenance, Captain Garland J. Robinson of Houston, Texas. "He's from Chanute Field and if one of the airplanes doesn't grab him up after the war they'll overlook the best man in the business," Good said.



Captain G. John Robinson resides in Austin, Texas, and remembers Dad as, "...one of those everybody loved..." About the plane, Capt. Robinson writes, "The creation was my idea. I happen to be the kind of guy who enjoys fixing old things. When I was 10, my father, a doctor, was trying to keep his model T Ford going with pliers and bailing wire. When I began to try to tell him how to fix things, he handed me the tool and retired to the house, never to return."

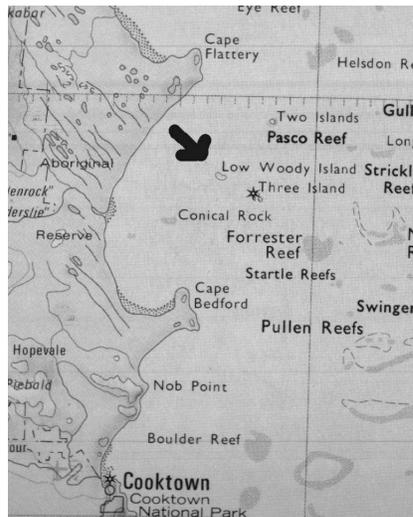
He continues, "I had noticed that 40-166, although belly landed, had no wrinkles in the fuselage. It stood in the graveyard in 7 mile completely stripped. I knew my guys could rebuild that fuselage and was mad that the Base 35 Service Group had not done so when we left it there on the runway. Everybody cooperated – our commander, the Base Supply (graveyard), so I got a flatbed truck and trailer and went after the fuselage. I talked to my top non-coms to learn who was the best mechanic – "Kip Hawkins," they said. Hawkins assembles a crew which included John Dugan, Joe Schram, and the whole sheet metal department of Johnnie Leonard and a kid from east Tennessee – Cline Parrott – actually, the whole squadron contributed as time and opportunity permitted. It was a squadron effort as many of the men got

rides to Australia in the months ahead. The loss of the Steak & Eggs was a blow but it is true that weather was the culprit. Lt. Vukelic had to set it down as fuel ran out. Hawkins did not like to fly but Dugan did, so he became the chief crewman on nearly all of the flights. But I expect ADOD got his turn too."

The Wreck



The Australian salvage team approached the wreck from a boat offshore. Located as it was on Low Woody, a remote island off the coast of north Queensland near Cooktown, it was the only way to get to it. Normally, it would hardly be worth the effort to travel this far to strip an A-20 Havoc, especially one that they knew had already had all of its weapons and ammo removed. But this was the, "Steak and Eggs Special," and that meant the possibility of something more valuable than any 50 cal. machine gun: beer! And they knew that there would be no questions asked by the Americans, since the plane didn't officially exist.



*The location of Low Woody Island, near Cooktown
(Courtesy of D. Hutchinson)*

The pilot, Lt. Rude Vucelic had done a credible job of beaching the plane after he ran out of fuel, but it was immediately evident that it would not fly again. The tail had broken off just behind of the bright blue and white star on the aft portion of the fuselage, and was laying at a right angle to the main body of the plane.



*The wreck of the Steak and Eggs Special on Low Woody
Island, North Queensland Australia, late 1943 or early 1944 (courtesy of D. Hutchinson)*



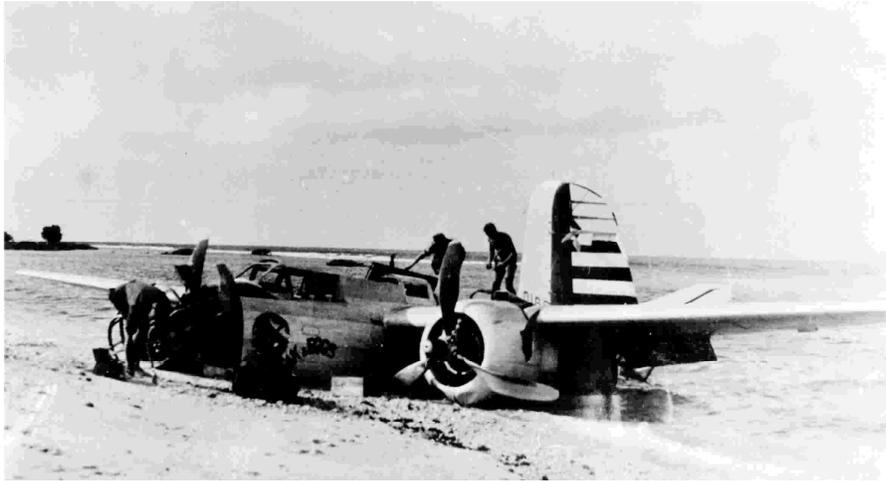
An Aussie salvager on the Steak and Eggs. Note the tail fin in the background to his right, and the tinted nose section fore of the logo. (courtesy of D. Hutchinson)

The body of the plane had recently been stripped of all of its dull green paint, and the bright, polished metal gleamed in the harsh summer sun. As the team clamored over the wreck, they noticed the shaded nose section just aft of the bombardier's canopy. The rumor was that the nose had been painted an OD green to distinguish it from the planes of the 22nd bomber group's famed, "Silver Fleet," after a plane that looked an awful lot like one of their B 26 Marauders had violated Sydney airspace and flown under the harbor bridge. The Steak and Eggs was the only other plane sporting a polished metallic finish in the area that day, although no one was ever able to prove the accusation.



Salvaging the cockpit. Note the serial number on the tail. (courtesy of D. Hutchinson)

On the port side of the plane was a clear indication of who the plane belonged to; the bright red, blue, green, white and yellow insignia of the 89th bombardment squadron was emblazoned on the side. The Steak and Eggs had fell victim to the weather. Lt. Vucelic had to set it down when it ran out of fuel. This time, though, the fuselage that had weathered one belly landing broke, but all passengers survived. The plane, 40-166, Little Hellion, The Steak & Eggs Special, had once more brought all of its crew back safely.



The salvaging of the Steak and Eggs. Note the "booty" just in front of the logo on the plane's nose. (courtesy of D. Hutchinson)



Salvaging parts from the nose section. Note the shattered Plexiglas (courtesy of D. Hutchinson)

Dick Hutchinson, an Australian that works for their Department of Defense, found the pictures of the wreck while going through the old files at an air base in northern Australia. He could not make out the nose art in the pictures, and contacted me searching for information. I was able to send him a copy of the picture on the title page, which answered his question. Since then, we have corresponded about the Steak and Eggs and other details about the 5th Airforce in Australia. Dick found a recent copy of Flightpath magazine that mentioned the Steak and Eggs Special and had a picture of Dad in it as well. That article mentioned the earlier story by John Robinson and Bruce Hoy, who Dick knew. Bruce sent Dick a copy of his article, and Dick sent it on to me. I then contacted Mr. Robinson, who filled out a few more details. This unlikely sequence of events led to the writing of this history.

Acknowledgements



Harris Ward and Ray DeSerio, members of the 89th and friends of Dad's, for their kind help and stories. May they fly at Altitude Minimum for many more years to come!

G. John Robinson, chief engineer for the 89th, for his kind letter and the chronicle of the Steak and Eggs, written by Bruce Hoy and Mr. Robinson for Flightpath Magazine,

Dick Hutchinson, my Aussie e-mail friend, for the pictures of the wreck, copies of the Flightpath articles and information on the location of the wreck.

Michael J. Claringbould, author of, "The Forgotten Fifth," and staunch supporter of the Fifth Air force in Australia, for the information on the Little Hellion and other planes from the 89th.

Of course, my sincere thanks go to Mary, for taking the time to sit with Dad and record his thoughts on the Steak and Eggs.



In Memoriam

To the memory of Ray DeSerio, who passed away since the writing of this work. His friendship, patience and enthusiasm will be sorely missed.