

November 2015

Newsletter



Dear Thirsty 13th members, relatives, and friends,

In the three months since the last update August 30, 2015, more information has been gained about the U.S. Army Air Corps 13th Troop Carrier Squadron, the “13th TCS,” the “Thirsty 13th.”

We have some new email recipients, and so I ask them to please note the Additional History is organized by year, so you can see which areas are applicable to your dad. In this issue most items are about 1942-43 in New Caledonia.

To enlarge the PDF to fill the width of your screen, press the CTRL key and the + sign at the same time. Click the hand symbol in the menu bar to make it easier to scroll down.

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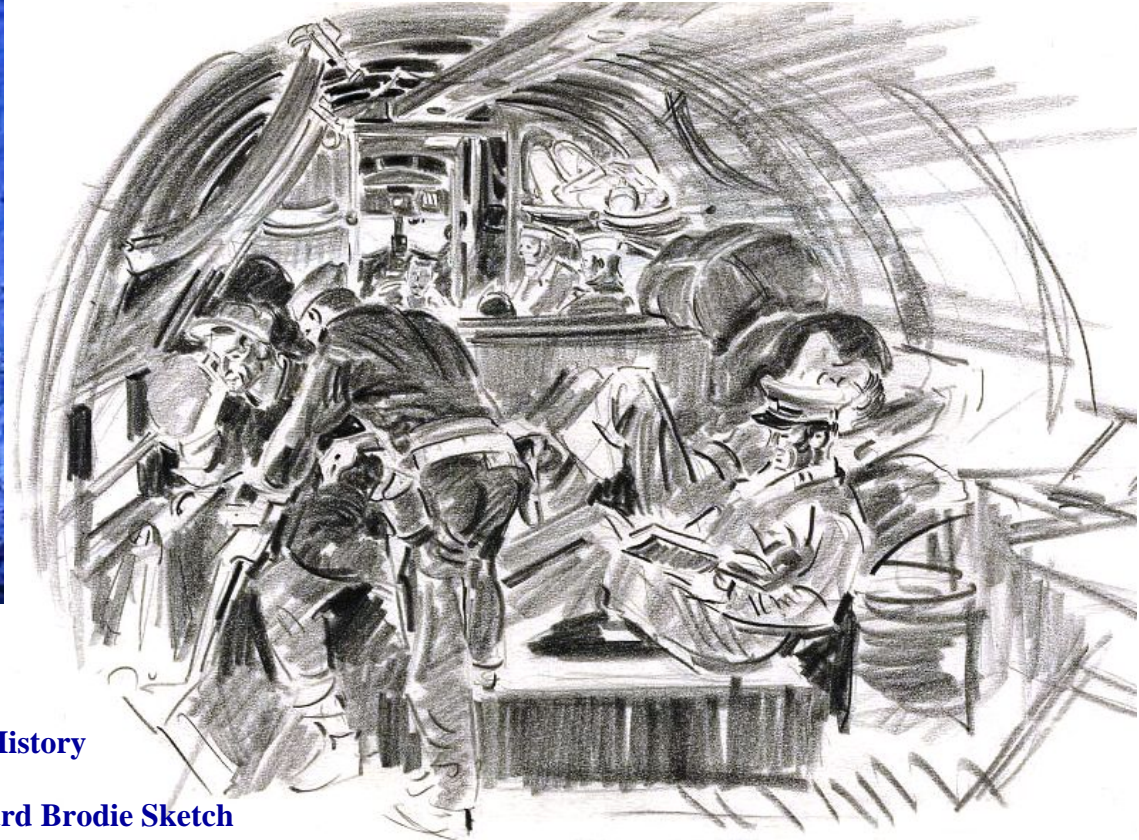
This is the newsletter for the U.S. Army Air Corps 13th Troop Carrier Squadron, 1940-1946, nicknamed “The Thirsty 13th.” This is prepared by Seth P. Washburne, the son of John C. Washburne, navigator 11/42-7/43. Please direct any comments to him at (212) 289-1506, sethpw1@gmail.com, or 5200 Meadowcreek Drive, Apt. 2060, Dallas, TX 75248.

Page numbers referred to are in the book “The Thirsty 13th” unless otherwise stated.

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Please click the hand symbol to make it easier to scroll down.



1. Additional History

a. 1942: Howard Brodie Sketch

On November 4, the son Charles of 1942-44 mechanic Charles Laine emailed me a link to the photo above, by Howard Brodie. He wrote: “Brodie's sketches of Guadalcanal are powerful stuff. This sketch captures a lot with a little. I like the canteen on the pistol belt, the view all the way up to the cockpit, and the ability of the soldiers/marines to ‘break in place’... anywhere they can find. Great sketch. The fact that it is a Thirsty 13th crew.... icing.”

During WWII Brodie was a famous sketch artist for Yank Magazine, and had “an uncanny ability to capture the emotions of the subjects and record a scene with great attention to detail.” He sketched scenes from Guadalcanal to the Battle of the Bulge. This scene is described as on a C-47 flying from New Caledonia to New Hebrides in December 1942. The Marines flew R4Ds, which were similar to a C-47, so perhaps he meant R4D, but if he meant C-47, which is likely, then this could only have been the 13th TCS. Therefore the 13th TCS flew Howard Brodie, and are honored to have been the subject of one of his sketches.

In the middle of the plane is a perhaps an engine box, with a duffel bag on the right. Above this, the person on the stretcher would be using that for resting, because wounded were flown south, not north. It is new to me that they kept a stretcher for napping, but this makes complete sense. On the right, the officer sits on a cargo box. The two possible routes – to Espiritu Santo or Efate, are shown above, and were over a beautiful world to look out upon.

b. 1942: Photo of Billie

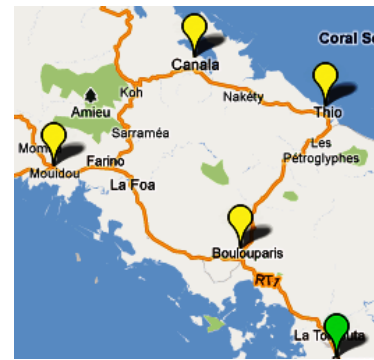
On November 13, 2015, the son of Remaklus emailed me the photo at right of Remaklus’s wife, “Billie.” Around October 1, 1942, one of the squadron’s first 13 C-47s, #41-18590, was named “Billie” after her (page 112).





c. 1942-43: Photos of New Caledonia Today from Marcel Claude

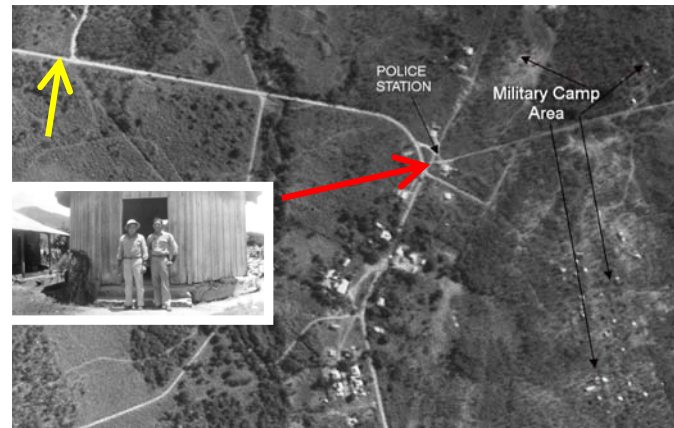
The map at right of part of New Caledonia shows at the green peg the 13th TCS camp near Tontouta Air Base. Four miles north of the camp is the view above, of the bridge across the Tontouta River. This is the same bridge, looking the same as in 1942-43, which the enlisted men would pass over every summer evening when taking a truck to the swimming area, page 234. Thanks to Marcel Claude for this.

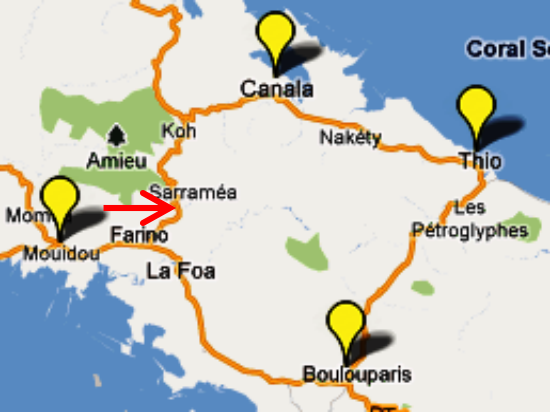


Boulouparis

The next town north is Boulouparis, shown at right in a 1943 aerial photo. The book on page 248 has the photo inset at right of a policeman's hut, and Marcel identified the location as where shown.

The beginning of the road from Boulouparis to Thio, in the direction of the yellow arrow at right is shown below. It was a dirt road in 1943, but otherwise the view is probably the same as the 13th TCS members would have seen. The pointed mountain on the left is Outitchambo Hill.





Road to Canala

The next town north of Boulouparis which 13th TCS members visited was La Foa. Marcel wrote that the restaurant in La Foa where US troops stopped was “Chez Banu.”

On page 248 Melton had the photo above of a Melanesian village. Marcel identified the location on the road to Canala at the red arrows above. This is now a private road, on tribal lands. He wrote: “The Grand Couli tribe is the only tribe located near a road that is visible with this angle. The vegetation has changed, and now there are brick houses and tin. The church dominates the square.” The tall trees, and the ridge above the clouds, are the same in both photos. The church is rebuilt at a different angle.



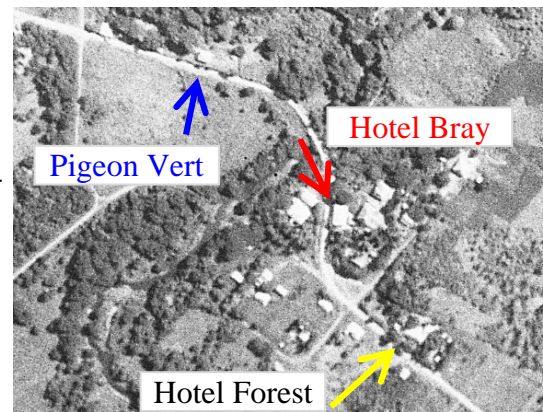


M. Claude

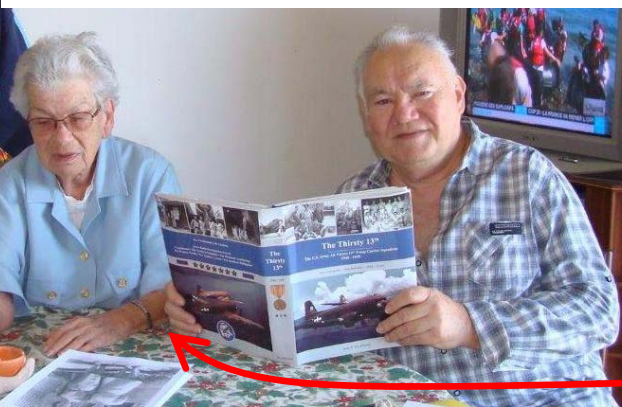
Moindou

The furthest town north the Thirsty 13th members would visit was Moindou. On page 246 is a quote from their yearbook “Two Years:”
 “Weekends were usually spent up-island at the restaurant at Moindou, with Mama, Papa, and three pretty French mademoiselles – **Theresa, Yvonne, and Antoinette**. And don’t think they weren’t chaperoned! Competition was keen, accomplishments lean.”

Marcel Claude in New Caledonia researched this and learned there were four young women, age 15-16:



- **Therese Quenneville** – she helped her older sister run a general store “**Pigeon Vert**” (Green Bird) from a house at the blue arrow.
- **Yvonne Bray** – she is pictured at left, and her parents owned **Hotel Bray**, with the restaurant shown at right in the 1930s, and above by M. Claude in the direction of the red arrow. It is now named l’Auberge (“The Hostel”), managed by Marie Josée Fayard, granddaughter of Mr. Bray. It was renovated to the 1940s style, replacing some wood braces.
- **Antoinette Forest** – her parents owned **Hotel Forest** at the yellow arrow, with a restaurant. Marcel was a friend of her son; his mother a friend of hers, and his father worked with Antoinette’s husband.
- **Raymonde Forest** – Antoinette’s sister. Jerome Schmitz had the photo at right labeled “Antoinette and Ramon.” In the book I mistakenly changed Ramon to Yvonne, but it was indeed Raymonde, a French feminine name. Pictured below on September 8, 2015, are Mr. Domergue who is the son of Raymonde, **Antoinette, now 90**, and Marcel. Also the Hotel Forest remains.



Moindou – continued

Marcel spoke with Mr. Fayard, grandson of the owners of Hotel Bray in 1942, who said the restaurant was mostly for pilots, and they would make reservations by dropping a message from their plane to an area between two hotels, with the time and number of guests. He also spoke to a Mr. Jacquier, who said he once served as a guide for American senior officers, and brought them to Hotel Bray, and they were not allowed to sit and eat because they were not airmen.

It is amazing that Marcel found the beautiful Antoinette, pictured in the book, and wonderful that she is still alive. Marcel relayed that “Antoinette has great memories of the American soldiers who came to the restaurant.” During the time of the war, Antoinette’s brother actually stayed in Marcel’s mother’s house, and sometimes Antoinette and Raymonde did, too. Her brother is 94 years old and still lives in Moindou, “a very small village that never expanded.”

Windham (Motor Pool, 8/42-9/45, per phone conversation in September 2015):

“We didn’t go up there that often, only after we got tired of eating our food, we’d go up there after work. We’d go up there maybe one time a month. Not only us, but a lot of people went up there, to Moindou. I drove up there many times, carried people up there. The officers ate at the same place.

“We didn’t call them restaurants, we just called them steakhouses. These families usually served them, they got into it before the soldiers really started going up there. You just go up there have a steak and come back.

“We just went to the one [Hotel Forest]. It was on the right, seems like it was on the outskirts as you were going into town. I never did go [to any other] but just that one.

“Seems there were always MPs on duty there, they were standing at the door, I guess they would walk around. You gotta have MPs. You can’t have a bunch of men walking around, or pretty soon you’re going to have some fights.

“Seems like there was a cook they would call Raymonde.

“They didn’t serve anything but steak and eggs [no salad or vegetables]. Seems like we’d always have a glass of wine. It wasn’t sweet or nothing, it was just one kind of wine, I never seen nothing but red wine, and it wasn’t sweet. I don’t remember what it cost, but it wasn’t much, less than \$2 I’d say [\$2 = \$27 in 2015]. Back then you got about \$21 [\$304] a month.

“They had a bunch of tables in there, as big as a Cracker Barrel, at least 20 tables, it was a pretty big place. There were 5 or 6 waitresses, because it was a pretty good sized place. They work pretty regularly; they had to; sometimes there would be a line to get a table.

“Antoinette was a waitress, she just waited on tables, I think she had a boyfriend there, one of the Marines of MAG-25; seems like they got up there first. She just joked and laughed with everyone, and flirted with them. You got a bunch of men, and someone is going to cut up with them, just like a waitress does. She was our normal waitress; she was probably 15 to 18 [actually 18 in 1943].

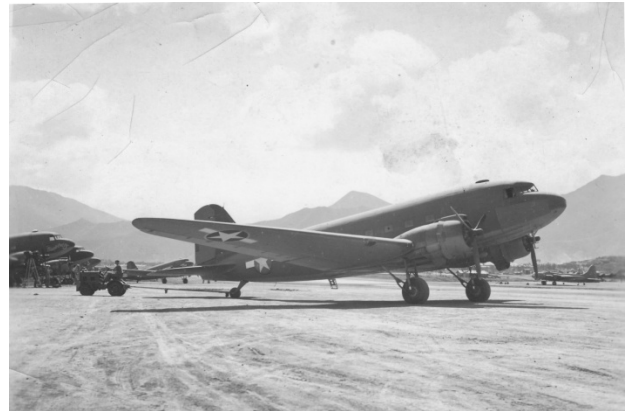
“Seems like we had to have a pass to go anywhere. They didn’t let everyone go at the same time, I guess that is why they required you to get a pass, and they had a time you had to be back.

“Seems like they had coffee plantations up there, they had drying beds, and coffee beds out in the sun. **It was off limits beyond Moindou, for Americans.** Australians were up on the other end of the island.”



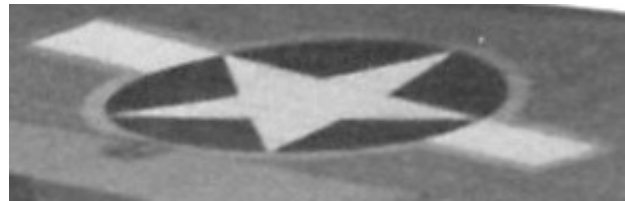
d. 1943: Tontouta Line Photo Colorized

In September I hired retouchrestore.com for \$49 to colorize our website homepage photo, at right, and think it looks great. This is run by one person, Rob, and he made some tweaks at no additional cost. Rob got the ground color perfect. A portion of a Google satellite view today, inset above left, close to this location, is almost the exact same color. It never occurred to me that this was all a dirt area, but it definitely was. Many things stand out more, such as the nose art on the left, and airplane ladder. I may have Rob do all the photos in the book someday.



1943: Air Corps Insignia

Rob at RetouchRestore.com noted that in the B&W photo there was a different color outline around the star, as shown at right. This was an excellent catch. I found on an internet page that the bars that were added on June 28, 1943, initially had a red outline as shown below. Then “in August (Army), and September (Navy), 1943,” the red was replaced with blue to avoid confusion with the Japanese. The photo above was September 11, 1943, after August, but the 13th TCS may have waited until September to paint over the red because under Navy command. The red in the photo above looks a little odd, but this was indeed the correct color.



The first official national insignia for US military aircraft was specified May 17, 1917, as shown below left, but as noted on page 22, the red dot was eliminated in May 1942.





e. 1943: Color Photo of C-47 Catfish at Vella Lavella

On October 9, my colleague in New Zealand, Ewan Stevenson, emailed me the color photos on this page, from the HistoryLink101.com site. These are at Vella Lavella, page 360, where the squadron first landed October 3, 1943. The photo above shows a C-47 landing or taking off.

In the photo below, the distant plane is the 13th TCS's Catfish (page 418), with paint removed from around the pilots' windows to look like fish eyes, at right. This had serial number 118654 which is actually readable. Catfish arrived in 2/43, and the 13th TCS first landed here 10/3/43, and this plane returned to the US 4/8/44 (pg. 429), so this shows the shade of this batch of olive drab paint after 8 to 14 months.





2. History-Related Activities

a. 1942: Curious Squadron Patch

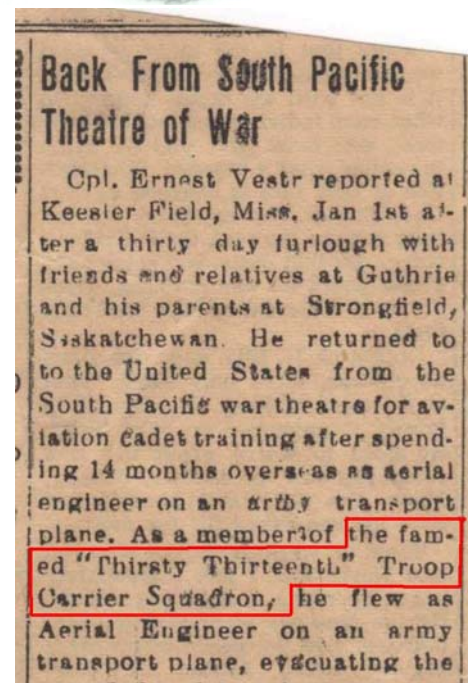
On November 17 the son-in-law of Larger emailed me photos of the patch at right he found on eBay, and purchased for his wife November 11. It is similar to the signs above at the entrances to the camps at Tontouta and Biak. The white is stitched vs. on the final patch it is the background.

The detail on the bottle suggests this was professionally done, not a project by a loving wife. The "T" is not tilted to the left as on the final patch, suggesting it may have been an earlier model, or alternative model proposed. If you have ever seen this design before, please let me know.

b. 1943: Vestre Article: The Famous Thirsty 13th

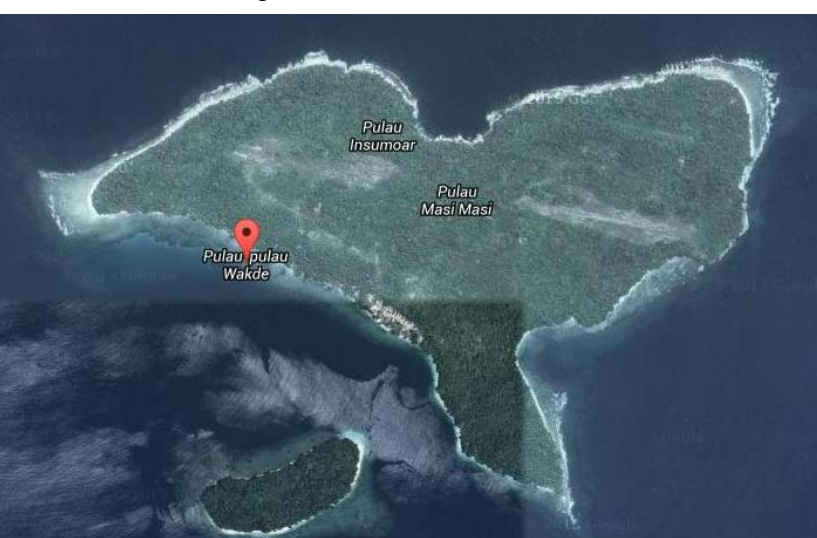
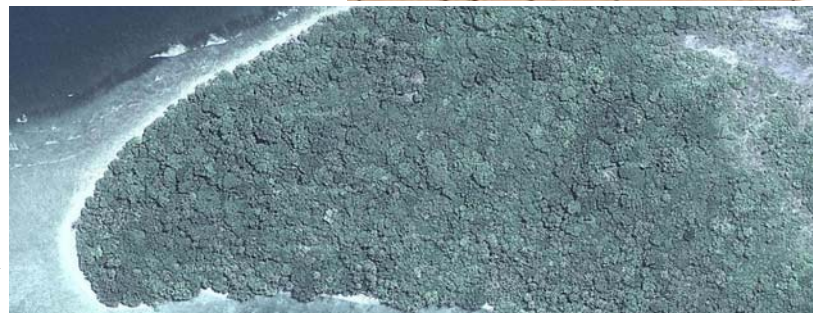
Vestre's son shared the article at right, from a January 1944 newspaper in Saskatchewan, Canada, referring to "the famous 'Thirsty Thirteenth' Troop Carrier Squadron," so the squadron was "famous" in Canada, too.

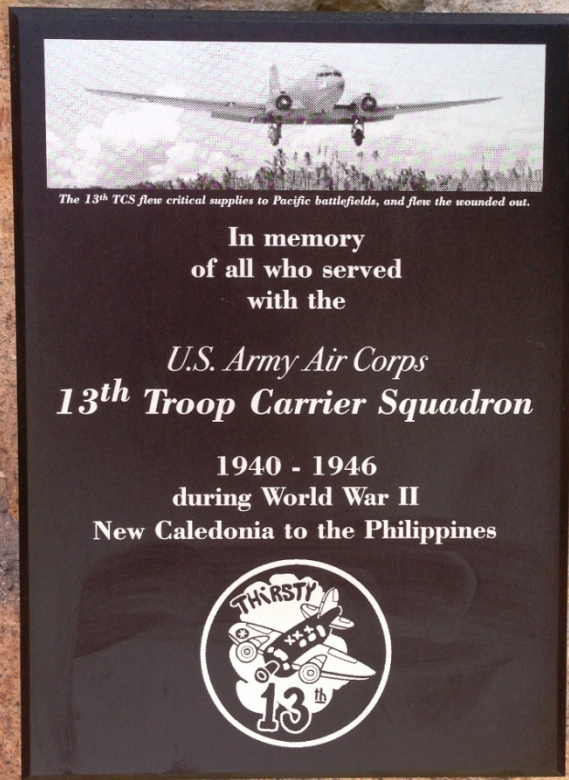
Vestre was in the first group of mechanics to go over in October 1942. In 1943 he was approved to return for pilot training, so left the squadron in late November 1943, and had this furlough at home in December.



c. 1944: Wakde Today

On September 26 John Voss emailed me that Google Maps now has an improved satellite image of Wakde, shown here. The runway area is still visible. There is a small village. The Thirsty 13th camped on the west tip, with the officers facing the northwest beach, enlisted men facing south. Palm trees have taken over.





d. Squadron Plaque Replaced at the National Museum of the Pacific War

This museum, in Fredericksburg, Texas, has a Memorial Wall, which for perhaps decades has had the 5" x 7" plaque above left, for the 13th TCS. This plaque:

- Had the Thirteenth Air Force emblem, not the squadron patch.
- Was in memory of the 15 "who lost their lives," and not the 662 who lived, yet the purpose of the Memorial Wall is to: "commemorate those who served – some who returned...and some who gave their lives," and so the plaque should remember all.
- Had dates "1942-1946" excluding the squadron's early days (WWII began in 1939).
- Referred to only the battles, "Guadalcanal to the Philippines," and not where the squadron served, and I thought it better to start with "New Caledonia."
- Showed a not-too inspiring C-47, in profile only.

I designed the plaque above right, and in the July 2014 newsletter asked readers for input. An estimated 7 people replied, picking one color combination for the patch, and no one objected. Therefore I had this replaced and the new plaque was installed September 17, 2015. The photo is Drake landing the first transport on Munda, from page 344. The photo caption is: "The 13th TCS flew critical supplies to Pacific battlefields, and flew the wounded out." I hope everyone likes it.

e. EAA offers the Thirsty 13th Book

In July I donated the 36 books to the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) in Oshkosh, Wis., and the 24 unsold ones are being offered in their online store. I suggested they offer it for 20% off, \$40. On November 10, 2011, I received their latest 56-page catalog, and the book is offered up front on page 6, at right.

Books & DVDs

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p>FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION GENE KRANZ</p> | <p>INTREPID AVIATORS GREGORY G. FLETCHER</p> | <p>The Thirsty 13th</p> | <p>SHOT DOWN STEVE SNYDER</p> |
| <p><i>Failure Is Not an Option</i> This memoir from veteran NASA flight director, Gene Kranz, tells riveting stories. 416 pages. 2298108700000...\$25.00</p> | <p><i>Intrepid Aviators</i> The true story of USS Intrepid's torpedero squadron 18 and its epic clash with the superbattleship Musashi. 448 pages. 2298025300000...\$17.00</p> | <p><i>The Thirsty 13th</i> A highly-detailed history of the first, and arguably the best ever, Army troop carrier squadron in the South Pacific. 800 pages. 2298080300000...\$40.00</p> | <p><i>Shot Down</i> The true story of pilot Howard Snyder and the crew of the B-17 Susan Ruth. 376 pages. 2298027900000...\$27.95</p> |

6 Your purchase supports the programs that help grow participation in aviation.

3. Members and Relatives

a. New Member-Families

In late September I decided to try again to find relatives of members I never found before. This expanded to trying to find the dates of birth and death, and place of burial, for all 677 men. This has been a huge project, seven days a week, 15 hours a day, for two months. The results so far are shown at right, and it is continuing. Some of the results will be presented soon in a Special Edition newsletter.

| Members' | Have | % | Not |
|-----------------|------|-----|-----|
| Birth Date | 624 | 92% | 53 |
| Death Date | 580 | 86% | 97 |
| Resting Place | 424 | 63% | 253 |
| FindaGrave Link | 344 | 51% | 333 |
| Contact | 272 | 40% | 405 |
| Have Book | 240 | 35% | 437 |

I found 41 new member-families. During this time the son of Laine found me, for a 42nd. The new member-families are listed below:

| | | | |
|------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Ando | Downer | Greenwald | Luras |
| Bell, Jack | Elfman | Hampton | Nitrauer |
| Brady | Epperhart | Haynes | Podolsky |
| Brauns | Faraclas | Hladczuk | Robertson |
| Brown, E. | Ferguson, J.B. | Jurkewicz | Rubin |
| Chapman | Franklin, M. | Kosovich | Smyth |
| Childs | Franzen | Kimball | Sorenson |
| Darnell | Freudenthal | Lach | Tozzini |
| Dean | Getter | Laine | Vestre |
| DeLoss | Gold | Lamb | |
| DiTullio | Gornbein | Lange | |

It was quite exciting to find each of these member-families. Eugene Brown is a pilot who flew a C-47 over in February 1943, page 297, and just turned 93. When I called the son of Getter, he said he had the Thirsty 13th patch on his dining room table. Several families had photos or papers, which I hope to scan, or get scans of, in the coming year, to add to the history. Readers of past newsletters know I am trying to find the location of the first temporary camp at Dumbéa, and Laine is the first person in seven years to have photos which appear to be of this camp, including one with a mountain outline, which might be the key to the puzzle.

b. Other

To our Friends in New Caledonia

The people in New Caledonia are French, have fond memories of the American presence during World War II, and have been incredible to us in helping with the squadron history. I hesitate to introduce current events, but feel it would be insensitive to not express my and I believe all of our condolences and sympathy with the terrible event November 13 in Paris.



I believe we all would like France and its people to know we stand by them just like in 1942, feel their pain, and share their hope that good will conquer evil, and that the people of Paris and everywhere in the world may soon again live without fear, and again with joy.

Thanks to the Gates and Taylor Families

In the last newsletter I shared four pages of wonderful photos from the family of Gates, and two photos from Taylor, and after I hit "Send" realized I had not thanked either of them in the letter. The Gates family in particular allowed me to visit for 3 hours to scan their dad's items. So a big thank you to the Gates and Taylor families for sharing these family photo treasures.

1942-43 Vestre Story

Vestre (Mechanic, 6/42-8/45, per 'A Conversation with...Ernest Vestre' in 'The Outlook,' local newspaper in Outlook, Saskatchewan, 2/2/2012): "Ernest recalled numerous flights when the hold of the aircraft was crammed full of 55-gallon drums of fuel. Flights through the combat zone most often took place at night, with the aircraft arriving at first light. Ernest supervised the unloading of supplies and the on loading of wounded soldiers for the return trip, which involved a stopover for refueling at New Hebrides Island.

"Our plane was fitted to accommodate 21 stretchers,' Ernest recalled. 'Oh, yes,' he added, 'we were in a combat zone. There was a possibility of interception by the enemy at any moment. Sometimes, we flew with a fighter escort.'

"On one occasion, the plane missed its estimated time of arrival. Our navigator was frantic. The two fighter aircraft were tucked under our wings glaring at us because their gas tanks were running low.' Ernest climbed into the 'blister' (the glazed dome on the aircraft) and scanned the sky. 'I thought I saw a bump on the horizon between 9 and 10 o'clock. Gradually, gradually, through the haze--way off on the horizon--the shape of a volcano [Mt. Tabwemassana, 6,128 feet, page 424] appeared, then mountains beneath. It was our destination,' he recalled. The plane had drifted 100 miles off course. 'I had excellent vision back then. I could spot a bogey aircraft before anyone else,' he chuckled.

"The endless flights took a toll on the pilots. 'They were flying the pants off those pilots.'

"Because pilots knew Ernest had a private pilot's license, they would sometimes say to him, 'There's the left seat buddy – take over and keep us on course.' Then they would close their eyes and take a much needed nap while Ernest flew the thirteen-ton C47 at 10,000 feet above the Pacific Ocean."

4. Conclusions

The squadron history moved a little further forward with the Brodie sketch, great research and photos from Marcel Claude, the amazing color photo at Vella Lavella, and other items. The squadron plaque at the Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Tex. was replaced, and 42 new member families have been found, among other things.

Be sure to raise a glass of beer to toast the squadron on the 75th Anniversary of Activation, Tuesday, December 1!

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Book Compliments

Someone mentioned they like reading these thank-you's at the end, so here are recent ones. Thank you to each one of you who wrote.

WG: "Books arrived this morning-----I am absolutely lost for words !! My dad would have been thrilled to have seen read it. I could picture him spending hours studying it from cover to cover. I will spend hours reading for him. Thank you is not enough for your time and effort you put into publishing this book."

C.L. 10/10/15 Titled "The Book has Landed." "One hundred plus pages in ,, hard to put into words. Truly outstanding work Sir! I hope the military museums are keeping a copy. What a valuable reference and resource. Thank you for researching and writing.... an easy read, well thought out, impeccable documentation. As good as I've ever read. Thank you, and really thank you for guiding me thru a reconstruction of what was probably the most important military period in my father's life. Amazing. Thank you.
And 11/11/15: "On this Veteran's Day I thank you for honoring those that gave so much. Your diligence in factually reporting the history of the 'Thirsty 13th' does credit to you and your Dad. Thank you for helping all to remember. Your efforts have purpose and reach far beyond what little recognition you have received. A heartfelt thank you from Sgt. L's sons."

D.J.: "The book arrived today. I cannot thank you enough for the look into Dad's past! I truly appreciate it as does my family. I spent time yesterday looking thru the book and am in awe of the detailed work you did. And to see Dad looking out from the pages was very special. He would have been proud to be a part of the book."

J.M. "Can't thank you enough for the passion you have put into to this effort! My dad never talked about those years in the South Pacific to me; I only eavesdropped on the conversations with he and my uncles on Sundays when I was a kid. Your work has provided information about him and those he fought alongside that I would have never known. You are a man of honor and purpose.....thank you. The book will be a family treasure. Gotta believe dad is smiling over this. Can't thank you enough!!

S.R.: "Thank you very much for keeping the memories of my granddad alive. We very much enjoyed him telling us of his adventures in the South Pacific. Your book will give us a permanent and accurate documentation of his service to our country. Thank you again for your time spent on this project. He was very honored to have his squadron featured in a book."

N.J.: "I want to share with you my son's reaction to the book I had purchased from you in the summer for his birthday. He was ecstatic. He was very impressed with the work that you did. He thanked me 3 times for it. You have given so many people a special gift in writing the book. God bless you. Thank you again."

J.M. (In response to a perfect condition photo I found of his dad getting the Air Medal):
"Many thanks.....this is special. Semper Fi, my friend. You are a man among men."