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Chapter 1 : INTO DRAGON'S JAWS/ FIFTH AIR FORCE OVER RABAU, By Lex McAulay | eBay

*Into the Dragon's Jaws/the Fifth Air Force over Rabaul, [Lex McAulay] on calendrierdelascience.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. The Fifth Airforce over Rabaul.*

Aviation History Hero , Mag: Aviation History Personalities Their assignment in the Pacific took Victor Tatelman and the other pilots and crew members of the 38th Squadron to new low levels in search of the enemy. What a rare opportunity! All he would have to do was line up on the targets and squeeze off burst after burst. No time to check results or worry about AAA " just keep shooting! Co-pilot Lieutenant Willie Graham deployed parafrag bombs at intervals as the bomber, dubbed Dirty Dora, passed over the sitting ducks, completing a sort of double whammy that left chaos behind them on the ground. The Japanese at Wewak were caught flatfooted on October 16, , paying dearly for not having dispersed their newly arrived aircraft. The final tally was 82 enemy aircraft destroyed " a loss that enabled the Americans to make a successful raid on Rabaul two days later. Not many people have heard of Victor Tatelman, who earned numerous Air Medals, two distinguished Flying Crosses and a Purple Heart in nearly combat missions piloting Mitchell bombers. As a new second lieutenant, he and several others of his class were sent to Williams Field, at Chandler, Ariz. On each flight he carried five bombardier cadets, who each got to drop a practice bomb on a target. Within six months he had become bored with that duty and asked for a combat assignment " unconcerned that reassignment might cost him his seniority. Tatelman, shown here in , flew close to combat missions in Mitchells and earned two Distinguished Flying Crosses and a Purple Heart. There, the pilots were assigned to the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st squadrons, which were to make up the 38th Bomb Group. At the 38th Group, assigning pilots to squadrons was a simple matter: The pilots were gathered in a room with four large tables and told to divide themselves equally among the four tables. Then each table was assigned a squadron number. The table Tatelman chose became the 38th Squadron. During the first two months at Columbia, the pilots concentrated on familiarizing themselves with the Mitchell bomber, as well as practicing with bombardiers and navigators. Then the group moved to Walterboro, S. Years later, Tatelman recalled that when he left Savannah, in the excitement of heading for the West Coast on his way to combat, he forgot to set the mandatory 10 degrees takeoff flaps that all Bs require. But when he began running out of runway, he quickly remembered. A quick pull on the flap handle and they were off the ground and on their way to Mather Field, at Sacramento, Calif. There, the latest combat modifications were made to the Bs. All winter adaptations were removed, the flight crews turned in their winter flying suits and the ships were thoroughly tropicalized. Of the 16 crews from the 38th that had set out from Hamilton, 14 reached Hickam. In , it was still a chancy undertaking. The 38th was only the second B group to cross the Pacific, and the Army Air Forces was still learning. Then they flew on to Port Moresby, set up camp and got ready for combat. Allied troops had landed at Buna, on the north coast of New Guinea, in the fall of . The 38th, now part of General George C. Their base at Port Moresby was ideally situated, only about 100 miles from Buna, across the mountainous backbone of New Guinea. The troops at Buna, mostly Australian infantry, were tasked with driving the Japanese out of Salamaua and taking Lae. Because they lacked a beach to set up a supply point by sea, they had to be supplied by airdrop, and the 38th got the job. Gunn effectively changed the way Tatelman and the other B pilots would approach operations in the Pacific. Gunn contributed many useful ideas, among which was a method of reconfiguring the Bs for low-level bombing. He believed they would be more effective in ground support if they operated at treetop level, and he convinced Kenney and MacArthur to try it. After six weeks of medium-level bombing, the Bs were modified as Gunn suggested. The bombardier nose was removed and replaced with one containing eight. A pilot bomb release was also installed. The plane had been transferred from the 38th Bomb Group and was received by the 38th Squadron in mid . Through a stroke of luck, Tatelman learned how Dora got her name. That meant visiting airmen were usually popular with the ladies in Australia. He explained that the Mitchell was named after a young woman who had moved in with him for the week he was visiting Sydney. It seemed that the original

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Dora had a sensual temperament and would, at certain moments, scream out the most profane obscenities. Rabaul was the most important Japanese strongpoint in the Southwest Pacific, because its air and naval forces threatened American forces in the Solomon Islands, on New Guinea and at sea. But the missions never consisted of more than a dozen airplanes, and the damage done to the enemy was seldom extensive. Aerial reconnaissance invariably reported more than combat-ready Japanese aircraft in the Rabaul area. The mission of October 18, , was designed to destroy the enemy air forces at Rabaul. The plan was for two Consolidated B Liberator groups with fighter escort to simulate an attack on Rabaul township that would draw up Japanese fighters to intercept them. The Bs would turn and bomb all but two of the airstrips in the area. Then, when the Japanese fighters were refueling on the two undamaged strips, two groups of Bs would arrive at treetop level and strafe and bomb them, as well as any Japanese bombers on the ground. On October 17 the th Air Apaches flew to Dobodura, where their planes were prepared for an early morning departure the following day. The 36 planes of the th, joined by 18 of the 38th Bomb Group and three squadrons of Lockheed P Lightning fighters over Buna, then set course for Kabanga Bay, the initial point of attack. As the mission progressed, the weather worsened. The front ahead appeared solid up to 12, feet. Lieutenant Colonel Clinton U. True, the mission leader, headed into the muck. Everyone in the formation pulled in tight so as not to lose sight of formation mates. True moved down to go through on the deck, and when a recall command from headquarters came through, he either did not hear the order or ignored it. When the bombers emerged from the clouds, no one seemed to have gotten lost, but the B pilots then discovered that their fighter cover had been turned back due to the weather. Colonel True continued on. As they crossed the coast, the 38th Group planes headed for their targets and the four squadrons of the th arranged themselves in attack array, with the th and th falling back while the th and st went in first. Tatelman took the west side of Ropopo airstrip, firing on targets as they appeared. Anti-aircraft fire from the base proved to be heavy but inaccurate. Smoke from targets hit by the th and st on their pass obscured some targets, but also gave Tatelman protection from the gunners on the ground. Then the th Bs were met by swarms of Zeke carrier fighters. Luckily for the th pilots and crews, the squadrons ahead of it attracted the most fighters. But the th was still not out of the woods. The Mitchells were jumped by 15 Zekes, three of which the B gunners downed. Amazingly, all nine planes of the th returned safely to Dobodura. The Allied forces on New Guinea alternately drove the Japanese back or leapfrogged them and cut them off from their supplies. By early March , Allied troops were ready to make a leapfrog landing at Yalau Plantation, just south of Madang, on the north coast. As it happened, Yalau had the only beach in the area suitable for use by landing barges, but it was overlooked by Dumun village, a Japanese strongpoint. It was vital that a smoke screen be laid down between the village and the beach just before the landing began. Tatelman, now a captain flying his 51st mission, led the flight assigned to drop white phosphorus bombs on Dumun to provide the smoke screen. Taking off before dawn, he led his flight through instrument weather for an hour, finally reaching better weather just opposite Yalau beach. Since he was five minutes early, he decided to dive under the low overcast to the southwest and strafe the village. He figured that he could do so safely by turning north, away from the mountains, as he turned off the target. He distracted the Japanese troops at Dumun with his strafing passes until , when according to the citation in his Distinguished Flying Cross award: His bombs set fire to the village which was totally destroyed and ground forces later reported that enemy casualties from this bombing and strafing were high; the remainder of the enemy force had fled the area. Because of his college engineering background, however, he was selected for a special mission. He was given a. When he did so, he found himself involved in an intensive three-month training session on radar and radar countermeasures at such places as Wright Field, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, IBM and installations at Boca Raton and Orlando, Fla. An increase in the accuracy of Japanese anti-aircraft fire would clearly have been an unwelcome development in the Pacific theater at that juncture, and American authorities hoped to take steps to counteract it. Tatelman learned about chaff, rope, window and electronic countermeasures jamming that would be available in the Pacific if needed. He also learned how to tell what countermeasures would likely be required in a given situation. His job was to attend heavy bomber briefings and to brief airmen on

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countermeasures against radar-operated anti-aircraft emplacements. The captain soon learned that the bomber crews were not too concerned about the accuracy of AAA. What really did bother them was that the Japanese always seemed to know they were coming. The enemy could no longer be taken by surprise, it seemed. The Japanese appeared to have developed an early warning radar capability. National Archives Remembering that Bell Labs had shown him equipment for homing on radar, Captain Tatelman proposed to his bosses that he obtain that equipment, then go after the early warning radar and destroy it. His proposal was approved, and Tatelman had it installed in a BD, which was configured in such a way that the homer could be conveniently placed in the now single-pilot cockpit. Within two weeks the aircraft was given a complete overhaul at Biak and outfitted with two new engines, an eight-gun nose, rocket launchers on the wings and a new name "Dirty Dora II". The civilian expert who had installed the homing equipment in Dirty Dora II flew with Tatelman a few times to adjust the equipment and check out how well it was operating. The expert became so interested in the project that he volunteered to fly as the equipment operator in actual search operations during combat. That arrangement worked out so well that he continued to fly with Tatelman on subsequent missions. His target areas were assigned through Bomber Command, generally in areas where B crews had reported their suspicions that the Japanese were waiting for them, a giveaway that they had had an early warning.

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The Vice Admiral Arthur S. There, the decision was made to bypass and isolate Rabaul rather than attempting to capture the base and attack Kavieng instead. Soon after the decision was made to bypass Kavieng as well. Although initially objected to by MacArthur, the by-passing of Rabaul in favor of its neutralization meant that his Elkton plan had been achieved, and after invading Saidor, MacArthur then moved into his Reno Plan, an advance across the north coast of New Guinea to Mindanao. The campaignâ€”which stretched into â€”showed the effectiveness of a strategy which avoided major concentrations of enemy forces and instead aimed at severing the Japanese lines of communication. References Frank, Richard B "The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle. Battle For the Solomons". History of the Second World War. Fire in the Sky: The Air War in the South Pacific. The Life of Gregory "Pappy" Boyington. The Third Attack Group of the U. Pictorial Histories Publishing Company. Champlin Fighter Museum Pr. The Solomons Campaigns, The Siege of Rabaul. The Reduction of Rabaul". The War in the Pacific. Guadalcanal to Saipan, August to July ". Office of Air Force History. The encirclement of Rabaul". Brief synopsis of Allied campaign to isolate Rabaul. Brief account of Japanese occupation of Rabaul and subsequent war crimes trials of many of the Japanese troops who had been stationed there. Marine Pilots in the Solomons, ". History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U. Marine involvement in air war over Solomon Islands and Rabaul. Archived from the original on Information on "Pappy" Boyington "Title:

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In October and November the US Army 5th Air Force planned and executed a number of daylight air attacks on the Japanese base at Rabaul, on the island of New Britain. Rabaul was the biggest Japanese base in the region, from which air, land and sea forces were deployed to occupy important bases.

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