



This Month in 35th Fighter Wing and Misawa Air Base History May 2014



May 1939: **Construction of Misawa Naval Air Base began** under the direction of the Imperial Japanese Naval Air Force in an effort to shore up defenses in Northern Japan with a 60,000,000 yen budget. The Government of Japan completed construction on February 10, 1942.

17 May 1942: First Lieutenant Harvey J. Scandrett of the 40th Fighter Squadron scored the **35th Fighter Group's first aerial victory**. Scandrett achieved this aerial victory in a Bell P-39 Airacobra.

20 May 1942: First Lieutenant **Thomas J. Lynch scored two aerial victories**. This was the first of total twenty aerial victories scored by Lynch before his death. To this day, Lynch remains the top ace of the 35th Fighter Wing.

May 1944: The **35th Fighter Group continued operations** from several airfields at Gusap, New Guinea. Toward the end of the month, the group began a movement to Owi in the Schouten Islands; however, the 35th Fighter Group was delayed en route due to unexpected enemy resistance in the **Battle of Biak**. Captain Edward F. Graham of the 39th Fighter Squadron described the situation:

In May, the [35th Fighter Group] continued its operation in the Wewak-Hollandia-Hansa Bay areas. By this time the enemy air force had dwindled to





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a minimum effectiveness. Consequently, our missions were performed at will. Personnel areas, supply, fuel, and ammunition dumps were daily targets for our fighters while escape routes of opportunity also received a considerable portion of the ammunition expended in strafing.

Graham continued:

Movement orders were received on May 24th with instructions to prepare for departure within twenty-four hours. The destination of the [39th Fighter] Squadron was not then known, but three days later it was surmised when a successful landing was made by amphibious forces at Biak Island in the Schouten Group on May 27th. The next few days were busy ones as the various departments of the squadron began moving to the decks at Lae by air. The squadron's air echelon was scheduled to remain at Gusap with only a skeleton operational personnel to carry on maintenance of aircraft and





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perform limited administrative duties. On the 25th of May, the squadron established a temporary campsite at Lae while the squadron's equipment was loaded on the "USAT Frederick E. Eilers." On May 30th the personnel broke camp and boarded the ship. It sailed the same day for Finschafen, a rendezvous point for the convoy up the coast of New Guinea to Geelvink Bay. Two days later the ship returned to Lae and anchored in the harbor. At this time one of the greatest tank battles in the Southwest Pacific campaign was raging at Biak and there had been some reverses there. It was because of the military situations at Biak that the squadron was delayed in getting started at its new base. Not until June 19 did the water echelon finally sail from Lae -- but it only got as far as Hollandia where it stopped again in the harbor and remained there for almost a month. On July 20th the boat sailed from Hollandia for the last leg of the journey. It arrived at Owi Island on July 21st and established a temporary campsite along the east beach pending the arrival of the air echelon from Gusap.

The air echelon, in the meantime, had moved from Gusap to Nadzab for a temporary location until the ground echelon reached its destination. It arrived at Nadzab on June 9th. Operations at Nadzab were training and gunnery missions. On June 25th the squadron received seven new P-47's series D-23 from Finschafen. Seven more were ferried in on June 27th. There were no more tactical assignments for the squadron until it moved up to Noemfoor Island in early August.



25 May 1962: Brigadier General Earnest H. Beverly, **Commander of the 39th Air Division, dedicated the Misawa Dependent Elementary School in memory of Lieutenant Colonel John A. Sollars**, Commander of Misawa Air Base's 531st Tactical Fighter Squadron. Sollars died on December 19, 1961, after ejecting from his F-100 Super Sabre during an instrument approach at Matsushima Air Base near Sendai. He remained with the crippled jet until it cleared a heavily populated area. Sollars escaped from the jet and survived in the Pacific Ocean until a rescue helicopter arrived. Sollars initially grabbed the rescue ladder that had been lowered, but he slipped off the rung, fell back into the water, and drowned. Prolonged exposure to the cold temperatures of the water had weakened him (See [The Misawa Wing Spread, December 22, 1961](#) and [The Misawa Wing Spread, May 25, 1962](#)).



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22 May 1963: Their Majesties, **the Emperor and Empress of Japan**, visited **Aomori-ken and Misawa Air Base**. On their return to Tokyo, they left the Royal train at Misawa Station and motored through the city and on to Misawa Air Base in their restored 1935 Mercedes Benz (photo right). At the flight line, Air Base officials met with them



before they boarded their DC-8 airplane. Thousands of spectators lined the streets of Misawa City and Misawa Air Base to catch a glimpse of the imperial couple.

2 May 1966: **The 13th Tactical Fighter Squadron activated at Korat Royal Thai Air Force Base**, Thailand. Under the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing, the Panther Pack flew Wild Weasel missions in the F-105 Thunderchief until October 1967.

16 May 1968: **A major earthquake, measuring a five on the Japanese scale, occurred off the coast of Honshu and Hokkaido** at 9:05 a.m. The resulting fires gutted large portions of Misawa City's residential and business sections. The base lost all utilities, several roads to landslides, and suffered severe structural damage to many buildings. At 7 p.m. the same day, a large aftershock ruined much of the cleanup progress made during the day (See [The Wing Spread, May 24, 1968](#)).

3 May 1980: The Japan National Railroad 'Cherry Blossom Express' departed Misawa Air Base with 380 U.S. and 10 Japan Air Self-Defense Force personnel bound for the Hirosaki City Cherry Blossom Festival.

11 May 1980: The Japanese/American Friendship Club, envisioned by Colonel Stephen L. Sutton and Major General Inagawa Shiro, held their first joint activity -- a picnic at Leftwich Memorial Park on Misawa Air Base.

31 May 1991: The **432d Component Repair and 432d Aircraft Generation Squadrons were inactivated** as part of the Air Force's Objective Wing reorganization. Most functions are realigned under the 13th and 14th Fighter Squadrons.



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24 May 1996: A1C Kozo Tahara, 3d Airborne Early Warning Group, became the first Japan Air Self-Defense Force member to attend the Misawa Air Base Airman Leadership School, class 96-F. Tahara graduated on June 28, 1996 (photo below)(See [Northern Light, June 7, 1996](#)).

