



## This Month in 35th Fighter Wing and Misawa Air Base History March 2015



Since World War II, the historic mission of Misawa Air Base has been the defense of Northern Japan and the collection of intelligence. In order to accomplish Misawa's defensive mission, both the Japan and the U.S. have stationed fighter aircraft at the air base. Here are a few of the important March anniversaries related to Misawa's fighters:

March 1, 1952: The U.S. Air Force established the 39th Air Division at Misawa Air Base with the mission of providing command and control of all aircraft assigned to the air defense of Northern Japan. The Air Division remained in place until January 15, 1968, and was Japan and the U.S.'s first line of defense against Soviet aggression in the Pacific.

March 31, 1978: The Japan Air Self-Defense Force's 3rd Air Wing headquarters relocated to Misawa Air Base from Matsushima Air Base with the 3rd and 8th Fighter Squadrons. The relocation was in part an effort to compensate for the departure of the U.S.'s Pacific Air Forces from Misawa in 1972 and the simultaneous removal of U.S. fighter assets.

March 18, 1979: The first Cope Eagle exercise took place on Misawa Air Base. It involved four F-15A Eagles from the 27th Fighter Squadron, Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, and a variety of JASDF aircraft including two F-4EJs and two F-104Js from Chitose, and two F-1s and two F-86s from Misawa's 3rd Air Wing.



March 21, 2003: Misawa Air Base's 14th Fighter Squadron flew the first non-stealth missions over Baghdad, Iraq and fired the first AGM-88 High-Speed Anti-Radiation Missile of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 14th employed all of the air-to-ground ordnance in their inventory, including the AGM-65 Maverick, AGM-88, GPS-guided bomb and cluster munitions, and 20-millimeter cannon.



Units Assigned to 39th Air Division	
4 FBW	1955-1957
12 SFW	1953-1954
21 TFW	1958-1960
27 FEW (SFW)	1952-1953
31 FEW (SFW)	1952, 1953-1954
49 FBW	1953-1957
407 SFW	1954
506 SFW	1953
508 SFW	1953
4 FIS	1954-1965
45 TRS	1960-1968
67 TFS	1967-1968
339 FIS	1955-1958
356 TFS	1965-1968
416 TFS	1960-1964
418 FDS	1957-1958
531 TFS	1960-1964
612 TFS	1965-1968



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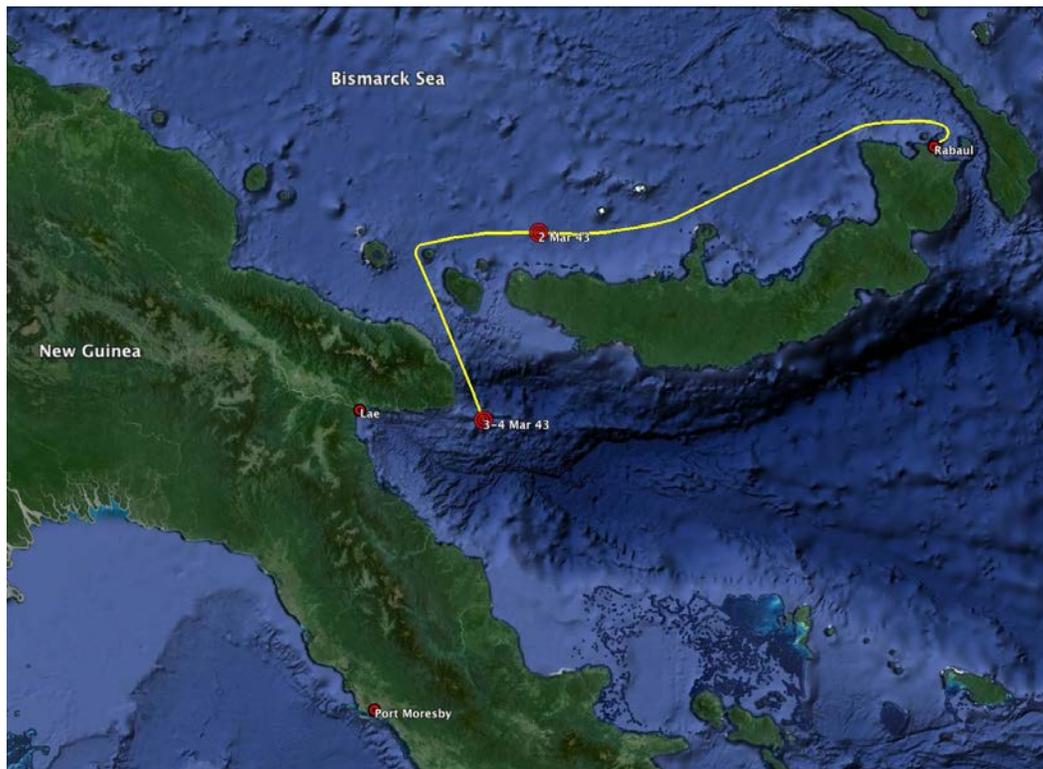
Additional anniversaries for March include:

March 17, 1942: The first aircraft lands on Misawa Air Base, a Type 1, twin-engine, land-based attack bomber assigned to the Misawa Air Group. The Allied code name for the bomber was "Betty."

March 2-4, 1943: P-38s of the 35th Fighter Group participated in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea. On each day of the battle, the 35th Fighter Group's P-38s departed Port Moresby to provide escort for B-24s, which were tasked with striking a Japanese convoy in the Bismarck Sea.

The 39th Fighter Squadron's historian recorded:

The Battle of the Bismarck Sea took place over a period of two days -- March 3 and 4, 1943. It was the culmination of an attempt, by the Japanese, to reinforce their hard pressed garrisons in the Buna area. . . . (On) March 3rd, the weather was good, and an assembled force of bombers, escorted by P-38s left Port Moresby to sink the convoy which was now approximately seventy-five miles off Cape Ward Hunt, headed for Lae. . . . As our force approached the convoy, our bomber formations were attacked by enemy interceptors. The ensuing action lasted for twenty minutes, as the enemy cover force fought a determined battle to save their shipping from destruction. . . . The 39th accounted for five "Zekes," three "Oscars," one, "Hap," and one unidentified type plane."





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The historian continued:

On March 4th, the second day of the Bismarck Sea Battle, the fight evolved into a complete annihilation of the twenty-two ship convoy. Only eleven planes of the 39th Squadron went back the second time. As our bombers and fighters returned to complete the destruction that began the day before the enemy air power came up to make another interception. Six more enemy planes were destroyed by the squadron. By the time the bombers and fighters returned to their base at Port Moresby, the entire convoy was lying on the bottom of the sea.

The success of the 35th Fighter Group came at a cost, and on March 3, the unit lost three pilots, including Capt. Robert L. Faurot, an ace of the 39th Fighter Squadron. However, the success of U.S. forces during the Battle of the Bismarck Sea prevented the resupply of Japanese forces in New Guinea, demonstrated the effectiveness of air power, and helped to ensure Allied victory in the region. (See the mission reports of the 39th Fighter Squadron, Attachment 1.)



March 8, 1944: Lt. Col. Thomas J. Lynch died after his P-38 Lightning was shot down a mile southwest of Aitape, New Guinea over a mangrove swamp. Lynch is the 35th Fighter Wing's all-time top ace with 20 aerial victories and remains missing-in-action. (See the newspaper clippings of Lynch's wartime record, Attachment 2.)



March 1, 1950: The 35th Fighter Wing is assigned to Fifth Air Force for the first time.

Above: Capt Robert L. Faurot, Ace.  
Below: Lt Col Thomas J. Lynch, Ace.

March 14, 1966: The 35th Tactical Fighter Wing was activated at Da Nang Air Base, South Vietnam, flying F-4 Phantom and F-102 Delta Dagger fighter aircraft.

March 23, 1981: General Lew Allen Jr., U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff, visited Misawa Air Base to observe the beginning of Cope North 81-2 as a guest of the Government of Japan.

March 9, 1985: The 432d Transient Alert Section performed its first official function when it parked a KC-10 Extender on Misawa's flight line. This was the first time a KC-10 Extender landed at Misawa Air Base.

PARTICIPATION BY 39TH FIGHTER SQUADRON, 35TH FIGHTER GROUP, IN THE BISMARCK SEA BATTLE, 2, 3 and 4 MARCH 1943.

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2 MARCH 1943:

Sixteen P-38's of the 39th Fighter Squadron took off at 0745/L from Port Moresby. Their mission was to escort B-24's which were to attack a Japanese convoy reported off the Northwest Coast of New Britain in the Bismarck Sea. Our P-38's followed a course from Port Moresby to Salamaua, Finschhafen, across the Vitiaz Straits to Umboi Island, thence to Cape Gloucester and out over the Bismarck Sea to a point South of the Witu Island Group. Due to stormy weather over the Bismarck Sea, our flights were at times out of sight of the bombers and our flights did not see the enemy convoy. On the return trip at a point 50 miles WNW of Arawe, New Britain, at 0930/L, our formation sighted three enemy Oscars flying below at about 10,000 feet that appeared to be shadowing our bombers. Our flights from an altitude of 15,000 feet dived in a stern attack on the Oscars. Two of the Oscars turned into our diving attack (the other Oscar turned tail) and both of the Oscars which engaged us were definitely destroyed in the brief ensuing engagement. Our flight returned to Port Moresby with no damage or casualties, landing at 1115/L.

3 MARCH 1943:

1st Mission: Sixteen P-38's of the 39th Fighter Squadron took off from Port Moresby at 0850/L to escort bombers which were to attack the Japanese convoy reported in the Huon Gulf approaching the enemy base of Lae, New Guinea. The sixteen P-38's of the 39th Fighter Squadron and sixteen P-38's of the 9th Fighter Squadron were the entire fighter cover for the striking force of our bombers. The fighters and bombers rendezvoused at Cape Ward Hunt and headed NNE. The Japanese convoy was sighted and at the time our formation was at 15,000 feet to 18,000 feet, the 9th Fighter Squadron was at approximately 15,000 feet and the bombers were at 5,000 feet to 12,000 feet. When our formation was approximately 25 to 30 miles from the convoy approximately 25 enemy fighters (Zekes, Haps and Oscars) were sighted 15 to 20 miles away between our formation and the convoy. Our formation pulled ahead of the bombers and started climbing for altitude preparatory to attacking the enemy formation. The enemy fighter planes started maneuvering, in what appeared to be a position to attack the bombers. Our formation hit the enemy fighters before they got to our bombers. When the initial attack was made on the Jap fighters they were at approximately nine o'clock high from our bombers and 10 to 15 miles from the convoy. Our bombers were able to make their runs without

*INCL - 18*

their formation being broken by the enemy fighters. Ten to fifteen other enemy fighters were at approximately 3,000 feet directly over the convoy. In the effort to keep the enemy fighters from attacking our bombers, part of our fighters went down and engaged the enemy formation which was down low. Our fighters stayed over the enemy convoy until all bombers left the convoy and took some of the enemy fighters off the tails of the last of our bombers to leave the convoy. This engagement lasted from 1000/L until 1025/L, in the course of which the 39th Fighter Squadron definitely destroyed ten of the enemy fighters, and damaged three other enemy fighters. Three of our own pilots did not return to base after this combat and are listed as missing in action. One of our P-38's was damaged by enemy fire, landing at Dobodura, and the remainder returned to Port Moresby.

2nd Mission: At 1330/L eleven P-38's of the 39th Fighter Squadron took off from Port Moresby on a mission to escort bombers which were to attack the Japanese convoy in the Huon Gulf. The 39th Fighter Squadron and the 9th Fighter Squadron were providing the cover for the bombers. Our squadron was close-cover and the 9th Fighter Squadron was top-cover. The fighters and bombers rendezvoused off Cape Ward Hunt and proceeded to the location of the convoy. The 39th Fighter Squadron was weaving over the bombers at approximately 12,000 feet. As the

*INCL 18*

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bombers started their run on the remaining ships of the convoy, enemy fighter planes, which were over the convoy, attempted interception of the bombers. The flights of the 39th Fighter Squadron dived in an attack on the intercepting enemy planes in an effort to protect the bombers and succeeded in scattering the enemy fighters over a wide area. A formation of enemy fighters over the convoy and above the 39th Fighter Squadron formation dived on the 39th Fighter Squadron planes when our initial attack was made on the intercepting enemy planes. The enemy convoy was spread over an area of approximately 150 square miles and a series of individual dog fights took place between the members of the 39th Fighter Squadron and the Japanese fighters over the scattered remnants of the convoy. There were approximately 20 to 25 enemy fighters in the melee. During the engagement the 39th Fighter Squadron succeeded in keeping the enemy so split and engaged that the bombers were able to make their runs at masthead height with virtually no enemy fighter opposition. The 39th Fighter Squadron did not leave the area until our bombers had made their runs and left the area. This engagement lasted from approximately 1515/L to 1545/L during which time the 39th Fighter Squadron destroyed one enemy fighter plane and five enemy planes were probably destroyed. Our formation suffered no damage or casualties and landed at Debodura at 1630/L.

Incl - 18

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4 MARCH 1943:

Twelve P-38's of the 39th Fighter Squadron took off at 1110/L to escort A-20's and Beaufighters on a strike mission to Lae and Malahang and to strafe survivors of the enemy's Bismarck Sea Convoy. After the bombers had completed their mission and at 1230/L our formation contacted a formation of between ten to twelve enemy fighters (Zekes and Oscars) halfway between Malahang and Finschhafen. The enemy fighters were at 7,000 feet. Our formation made a diving attack from 12,000 feet on the enemy planes at 7,000 feet. In the course of this engagement our formation definitely destroyed four enemy fighters and damaged seven enemy fighters. No casualties were sustained to our formation. All pilots returned to base safely between 1330/L and 1445/L. One P-38 was damaged by enemy 20mm fire

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Lynch, Thomas J.

**CATASAUQUA AIRMAN  
BECOMES BATTLE ACE**

Captain Thomas J. Lynch, 26-year-old Catasauque Army flier, became an ace as he celebrated the end of 1942, in glorious style by shooting down two Jap planes in a 20-minute scramble over the Puna area Thursday.

It brought Lynch's score to four Jap Zero planes in two fights in less than a week and he was credited officially with six planes since he shot down two Japs last May when flying a P-39.

A flier becomes an ace after shooting down five or more enemy planes.

The flier who had already been decorated with a silver star for his previous fights against the Japs had a flight into battle twice with war

correspondents in the New Guinea zone hailing the feat as "virtually shooting the enemy from the skies in a series of savage sweeps."

The Catasauqua flier's parents had received information on Thursday of the earlier flight this week. They are Mr. and Mrs. William Lynch, 426 Walnut Street, of that borough.

JAN 2 1943

January 2, 1943

Lynch, Thomas J.

## CATASAUQUA ACE BAGS ANOTHER JAP PLANE

FEB 11 1943

**Capt. Thomas J. Lynch, 26,  
Brings Down Eleventh in  
Pacific Area.**

Captain Thomas J. Lynch, 26-year-old Catasauqua flying ace who was rated as one of the three ranking aces of the Southwest Pacific area in a release from General MacArthur's headquarters in Australia last month, gets credit for another Japanese plane in a story made public by the War Department.

Tommy Lynch's squadron, accord-

ing to the advices of the War Department, took part in a three-day battle January 6-8 over New Guinea and New Britain in which the 16 members of the single American fighter squadron shot down 24 Jap planes.

Lynch, whose parents live at 426 Walnut Street, Catasauqua, has been in the thick of the fighting for several months in the Southwestern Pacific theater of war.

February 11, 1943

Lynch, Thomas J.

**CATASAUQUAN WINS "D. F. C.";  
IS SECOND DECORATION**

Captain Thomas J. Lynch, Catasauqua, who a few days ago was credited with having brought down his eleventh Jap plane, has been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, according to announcement made yesterday by Lieutenant General George C. Kenney, commander of the Allied Air Forces of the area.

The award was given Captain Lynch for "extraordinary achievement" in having participated in more than 50 operational night missions against the enemy in the Southwest Pacific.

This is the second decoration won by the 26-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. William Lynch. Last year he received the silver star decoration by Lieutenant George H. Brett for gallantry in action in the Southwest Pacific.

FEB 15 1943

February 15, 1943

Lynch, Thomas

**Major Thomas Lynch  
To Marry Saturday**

OCT 20 1943

The marriage of Major Thomas Lynch, Catasauqua hero who is home from the aerial war of the South Pacific, to his "prom girl", Rosemary Fullen, of Swissvale, suburban Pittsburgh, will take place Saturday morning.

The ceremony will be performed Saturday at 10 a. m. in St. Anslem's Church, Swissvale. The attendants will include Mrs. Donald Oswald of Catasauqua, sister of Major Lynch, as a bridesmaid, and William Lynch, younger brother, an usher.

Others in the bridal party will be Mary Durry, roommate of Miss Fullen at Seton Hill College, where she met Major Lynch; Sergeant Walter Fullen of the Army Air Forces, brother of the bride-to-be, as best man, and Edward Fullen, also a brother, as usher.

Major Lynch and Miss Fullen met four years ago, while the courageous airman was a student at the University of Pittsburgh. He has been ordered to report to Washington, D. C., the first week of November for transfer back to a theater of war.

October 20, 1943

Lynch, Thomas

## Lt.-Col. Thomas Lynch, Air Ace, Catasauqua, Killed In Action

PITTSBURGH, (AP)—Lt. Col. Thomas Lynch, Army Air Forces hero from Catasauqua, Pa., with 20 Japanese planes to his credit, was killed in action over New Guinea last Wednesday, the War Department notified his wife here today.

No details of the air battle in which he met death were contained in the terse message from the war department, a member of his wife's family said.

Mrs. Lynch, almost prostrated by the shock, left two letters from her husband unopened. They arrived shortly after the telegram.

Their wedding during his brief furlough last Fall climaxed a romance that began at a college dance four years earlier. Col. Lynch returned to the Pacific Theater after their honeymoon—the area in which all of his air exploits were accomplished.

The report he had shot down his 20th Jap plane came from the war department the same day of his death, March 8. It was his fourth aerial victory since returning to the South Pacific Theater.

Col. Lynch, who was 27, was the second University of Pittsburgh flying ace—and also the second Lieutenant Colonel—to lose his life.

The first was Lt. Col. Boyd D. (Buzz) Wagner, of Johnstown, who also had 20 Japanese planes to his credit. He was killed when his plane crashed in a Florida pasture while on a tour of duty in the United States.

At the time Col. Wagner, then 26, was the youngest Lieutenant-Colonel in the Army.



LT. COL. AND MRS. LYNCH

undated

Lynch, Thomas J.

## Expresses Hope That Col. Lynch Is Still Alive

MAR 28 1944

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas J. Lynch was shot down while strafing a Japanese ship off the northern coast of New Guinea on March 8 and it is not impossible that he may have survived the parachute leap from his plane. Lieutenant General George C. Kenney, commander of the Fifth Air Force, wrote in one of two letters received yesterday by the pilot's parents, Mr. and Mrs. William J. Lynch, of 426 Walnut Street, Catasaugua.

The second letter, a note of condolence, came from General Douglas MacArthur, supreme commander of the Southwest Pacific area.

Colonel Lynch, with 20 kills to his credit, was flying a mission with Captain William Bong who circled the area for some time after the Catasaugua airman left his disabled ship but was unable to tell whether Colonel Lynch had survived the leap into a heavily wooded area.

Colonel Lynch was shot down on the day following his elevation from the rank of major and less than three months after he married the former Rosemary Fullen, of Swissvale, Pa., while on a 30-day leave.

General MacArthur's letter follows:

"I cannot express to you the poignancy of my regret at the death of your son. His service under me was characterized by his complete devotion to our country and his noble death impregnates him with its imperishable glory. I have lost a gallant commander-in-arms and with you mourn a splendid gentleman."

The letter from General Kenney follows:

"I have always had the great confidence in Tom as one of the most capable fighter pilots in the theater. Endowed with high courage and leadership, he brought his men through danger to victory on many occasions. His personality and his gallantry in active combat with the enemy, endeared him to all of us."

"There is little I can tell you about the accident. The engine of his airplane was set on fire by the Japanese while he was strafing a ship along the northern coast of New Guinea. He bailed out but it is believed by Captain Bong, who was with him, that his parachute did not have time to open. The captain circled the place where he went down but was unable to see anything, as the country is thickly wooded."

"I do not think it is fair to hold out much hope that he survived the jump, but that is not impossible. If he has, he will have been taken prisoner and you will receive word through the Red Cross."

"Tom was one of the heroes the Fifth Air Force can never forget. We will find it more difficult to carry on without him. But his memory will help those of us who are left to keep up the fight for the things he believed in; the things for which he sacrificed so much."

March 28, 1944