

*As she visits our barracks or shanty,  
For now it's our inning, America's winning –  
And that means there must be a Santy!"*

The author of the poem is thought to be 2/Lt John W. Easterling, copilot on the Kappil crew.

Since there were usually two crews to each plane, disputes over naming rights sometimes arose. In early January 1945, the Reeves and Farrell crews were assigned to share a newly arrived aircraft, Z-30 (2nd) 42-63487, so AC's John Reeves and Jim Farrell flipped a coin to see who got to name it. Reeves won, so Z-30 became "Constant Nymph". But later Farrell, a San Francisco native, got another opportunity with Z-34 42-93889, which he named "Frisco Nannie".

Despite the initial high enthusiasm, not all planes in the 500th were named. The first Z-43, 42-63441, apparently never had a name, and several later replacement planes were also not named. Some crews actually thought naming a plane was unlucky.

## **2 Dec 44**

Today George Hughes, airplane mechanic in the 881st Squadron, got around to writing his parents about being on Saipan. He was also now permitted to tell them how he got there – via Honolulu, Pearl Harbor and the Marshall Islands. Then he updated them on his duties. "I am working mostly days now [*George was a ground crewman on Z-1*] but once in awhile I get caught for a few nights work. I have been getting plane guard quite regularly." Other than that, "You can read about the B-29 raids in the papers and there isn't anything else to write about."

Even though they were on a friendly base, the planes had to be guarded, partly because there were still a few Japanese soldiers on the island who would roam around at night foraging for food and other items, and partly because you had to guard against other air and maintenance crews who might make "moonlight requisitions" for parts and items of equipment they needed.

Like George Hughes, Bob Copeland didn't have much of substance to record either. "I didn't do a thing that was exciting today. I did try to dig a foxhole though and would have succeeded except for the coral. ... [*Navigator 2/Lt Robert*] Nelson was an eager beaver today and did his laundry. I'll try to do mine tomorrow." Copeland did however find out that the air raid last night was actually a B-24 with its IFF [*Identification Friend or Foe*] switched off.

John Ciardi the poet-gunner was not happy with military regulations, specifically today the one that required guns on parked planes to be unloaded. If a plane had been prepped for a mission but then the mission had been called off, all the ammo that had been laboriously loaded into the turrets and guns had to be just as laboriously taken out. The ammo belts of .50 caliber shells were heavy and cumbersome and it was hot inside the planes. Ciardi didn't see why it all couldn't be left in place. After all, "There's just no way of firing the guns accidentally." Ciardi was probably right that the guns wouldn't fire just sitting there, although they could go off accidentally while being loaded and charged. But the command was probably thinking that if a plane on the ground was hit in a Japanese air raid and set afire, the ammo would cook off and do a lot of damage.

Ciardi saw a couple of new things today. The first involved an ingenious wind-operated washing machine, a contraption consisting of fan blades connected to a bicycle sprocket, which moved wooden arms, which moved a plunger up and down in a tub full of dirty clothes. The second thing he learned was how to get a beer cold. One of the ground crew poured some 100 octane gas into a bucket, dropped in two cans of beer, then put in an air hose. The gasoline quickly evaporated and left two frosted cans of beer. Amazing.

## **3 Dec 44**

On this day the 73rd Bomb Wing mounted another major attack against -- yep, you guessed it, and so did the Japanese -- the Musashino Aircraft Engine Factory near Tokyo. This would be another daylight, high-altitude mission. Secondary target was again the industrial and dock areas of Tokyo.

The 73rd Wing mission planning staff had definitely learned. Again, no complicated Combat Groups this time. Each Bomb Group would form its own combat group, thus maintaining unit integrity. The 500th would be second in the Wing order this time, behind the 499th Group.

The 500th Bomb Group scheduled 23 aircraft for this mission, but one, Z-21, "Devils' Delight", Pierce crew, failed to take off due to excessive RPM on #4 engine. The 22 planes which made it airborne were divided into two combat squadrons, as follows:

#### First squadron

Z-42, "Supine Sue", Moreland/McDowell  
Z-48, "Million Dollar Baby", Black  
Z-46, "Su Su Baby", Holmes  
Z-47, "Adams' Eve", Adams  
Z-50, "Fancy Detail", Braden  
Z-45, "Mustn't Touch", McClanahan  
Z-41, "The Baroness", Amos  
Z-30, "Slick Dick", LaMarche  
Z-49, "Three Feathers", Setterich  
Z-22, "Leading Lady", Hurlbutt  
Z-26, "Tokyo Local", Grise

#### Second squadron

Z-1, "The Rosalia Rocket", Goldsworthy/King  
Z-5, "There'll Always Be A Christmas", Luman  
Z-6, "Draggin' Lady", Field  
Z-10, "Punchin' Judy", Thompson  
Z-9, "Nina Ross", Hatch  
Z-7, "Hell's Belle", McNamer  
Z-4, "Black Magic", H. Jackson  
Z-28, "Old Ironsides", Gerwick  
Z-25, "American Beauty", Van Trigt  
Z-24, "Pride of the Yankees", Tackett  
Z-27, Cordray

Lt Col William McDowell, CO 883rd Squadron, would lead the first squadron, riding with Capt Charles Moreland and crew in Z-42. Deputy Lead of the first squadron would be Maj John Gay, 883rd Squadron Operations Officer, flying with Capt Vance Black and crew in Z-48. Col Richard King, Group CO, would lead the second squadron and the Group, occupying as usual the right seat in Z-1 with Maj Robert Goldsworthy and crew. Also riding with Goldsworthy would be Col Byron Brugge, 73rd Wing Chief of Staff. There is some evidence that Brugge was originally scheduled to fly with Deputy Lead Maj Robert Luman in Z-5 but at the last minute decided to go instead with his good friend and old West Point football teammate Dick King. If so, it would prove to be a fateful decision.

The first squadron took off from 0833 to 0844, the second from 0845 to 0854. Bomb load would be the same as on the 24 Nov mission, 7 x M64 GP's and 3 x M76 IB's in the rear bomb bay, with auxiliary fuel tanks in the forward bomb bay. Each plane carried a full ammo load of 6000 rounds of .50 caliber and 125 rounds of 20mm in the tail cannon. Two planes carried special receivers for collecting information on Japanese radars, but they are not directly identified. However, since 2/Lt Norman Garrigus, the 882nd Squadron RCM (Radar Counter-Measures) Officer, went on this mission in Z-24, we can safely assume that Z-24 was one of the specially equipped planes.

Not participating in today's mission to Japan were the Samuelson crew. Their plane, Z-3, the aptly named "Snafuperfort", had required extensive repairs after experiencing multiple malfunctions including a bomb rack failure on the 24 Nov mission. Finally today she was back in commission but needed a test flight to properly check everything out, and that's what the Samuelson crew did today. They turned it into a practice mission to still Japanese-occupied Rota Island between Tinian and Guam. Samuelson: "Our bomb racks were loaded to capacity and we really had fun. Lt. Wright dropped some on the airfield, the town and the docks. The island was already a total wreck, however, we may have done some good."

While the Samuelson crew were working over Rota, the rest of the 500th planes were well on their way to Japan. That is, except for Z-4, Harlan Jackson crew, which had to return to the field shortly after take-off due to a burned out propeller governor on #4 engine. The loss reduced the second squadron to ten planes.

The plan called for the formations to assemble a short distance north of Saipan and fly at low altitude, under 1,000 feet, for about half the way out, which would burn off some fuel before beginning the climb to 30,000 feet. As it happened, the second squadron began its climb earlier than briefed, probably to get over some bad weather. This decision, along with a variation in navigation, meant that as the 500th planes approached Japan, the second squadron ended up about ten minutes in front of the first.

About 30 minutes from the I.P., which was again Mount Fuji, the second squadron, now the lead squadron, was reduced by another plane when Z-6, Field crew, lost an engine and aborted. On the way home she would lose a second engine but made it back to Saipan. King and Goldsworthy now had only nine planes. Z-6 had been on Z-1's left wing. At about this time Z-5, Luman crew, for unspecified reasons relinquished the Deputy Lead position on Z-1's right wing and switched positions with Z-10, Thompson crew, which had been filling in the diamond in the lead element. This switch probably indicates a technical problem on Z-5, possibly with the C-1 autopilot or maybe the radar. The autopilot was necessary to hold the plane steady on the bomb run, and the radar would be necessary if the target was covered by clouds. The switching and the drop-outs disrupted the squadron's formation. Maj John Van Trigt, until this point leading the third element in Z-25, tried to move up onto Z-1's left wing.

The weather over the Tokyo area this day was unusually clear. Good news for the attackers. A visual run. But at 30,000 feet the B-29's again experienced extremely high winds from the west, estimated at up to 200 knots, which made it very difficult even to reach the I.P. The squadron leaders crabbed many degrees to the left to try to compensate, and the other planes tried to follow, but in the end most planes had to turn before reaching the I.P.

The heading from the I.P. to the primary was supposed to be 63 degrees, but the squadrons were already off that course due to the early turn east of Fuji, and the strong winds continued to push them eastward. It would have been easier to give up on the primary and go for the secondary target, Tokyo, but most pilots tried hard to make the aircraft factory.

The formations had been drawing sporadic antiaircraft fire ever since landfall. As they approached the target area, the flak picked up in intensity but still remained generally ineffective. A few planes were hit but none seriously.

As for fighters, the 500th had been fortunate in not encountering any on its previous missions. Today would be different. With plenty of warning, the Japanese had assembled dozens of fighters at high altitude, by some reports as many as 70. As the bombers neared the drop point, the fighters picked their targets and dove down in their firing passes. Showing a healthy respect for the heavily armed B-29's, the fighters generally zipped thru the formations from ahead and above, throwing quick bursts and breaking away below and to the rear.

Sgt John Ciardi, right gunner on the Cordray crew in Z-27 on the left rear of the lead squadron, was mostly a frustrated observer during this time. Up front, bombardier 1/Lt Lynn "Doc" Grow was "spraying at planes all over the sky", while simultaneously trying to keep an eye on Z-1, the lead plane, on which he was supposed to toggle his bombs. Up in the ring seat, Sgt T.J. Moore was blazing away with the two upper turrets. Ciardi was left to share the lower aft turret with left gunner Cpl Richard C. "Tiger" Johnson, and Tiger seemed to have the better chances. Ciardi never got a shot away. Sgt Clyde Salaz in the tail likewise didn't have much to do, catching only fleeting glimpses of fighters zooming past at relative speeds of about 600 mph.

The Japanese scored first. Z-7, "Hell's Belle", McNamer crew, on the far right of the lead squadron, took a 20mm round below her nose which caused the bomb bay and wheel well doors to open and the landing gear to come down. The drag slowed the plane immediately and she began to drop behind. Men on other B-29's who saw the nose wheel come down thought at first that the crew were preparing to bail out, since normal emergency exit from the front compartment was via the nose wheel hatch. But the crew weren't ready to abandon their plane yet.

Sensing a kill, the fighters closed in. The McNamer crew were able to get the landing gear back up but the doors would not close, and the bombardier, 2/Lt Robert J. Wittwer, was unable to salvo the bombs. All the while this was going on, the fighters were shooting Z-7 full of holes. As radar operator Jack Heffner described it, the fighters "sent 20's thru our tail, making huge holes, and knocking out the tail guns. Another tore a huge hole in the side of the fuselage, back of the radar compartment, and shot up a lot of control cables. One also nipped off part of the rudder." Z-7 was in big trouble.

Unexpected relief for Z-7 came at the expense of another B-29. Just before bombs away, Z-1, out in front leading the formation, was attacked by several fighters. A Tony flown by Capt Teruhiko Kobayashi, the youngest group commander in the Japanese Army Air Force and a reputed hot pilot, made an accurate head-on attack and hit Z-1 in her left wing tanks. Flaming gasoline quickly began to flow over the wing and into the plane. Z-1's gunners shot back. Kobayashi was hit, probably by the ring gunner, Cpl Robert Abel. The Tony dove away smoking, but Kobayashi made it back to base. Goldsworthy saw several other fighters hit and one of them explode. But the fighters had knocked out at least two of the bomber's engines. As she dropped out of formation on fire, most of the fighters followed her down. Ciardi on Z-27 watched as "first one and then another broke off and dove at No. 1 for an easy kill. When I saw her last fighters were swarming all over her." With most of the fighters drawn away, the crew of Z-7 were finally able to salvo their bomb load, then McNamer put on full power and successfully pulled away.

Not so lucky were the crew of Z-1. As the plane was going down, airplane commander Goldsworthy gave the order to bail out but stayed at the controls himself, straining to hold the big bomber level in order to give his crew time to get out. But there was an immediate problem. The men up front had to go out thru the nose wheel hatch but the landing gear controls had been shot up and the nose wheel wouldn't go down. Quick-thinking flight engineer Hank Warde jumped into the nose wheel well and kicked at the wheel until it went down. This allowed King, Brugge and Warde to exit. The bombardier, Walter J. "Pat" Patykula, seemed to be in a daze and in no hurry to leave the plane. By this time, the rear of the front compartment where the navigator and radio man were stationed was fully aflame and the fire was spreading forward. With "flames licking at the seat of my pants," Goldsworthy finally gave up the controls, dragged Patykula to the exit hatch and pushed him out, then jumped out himself. The radio operator, John Wright, somehow made it out of the plane, possibly through the forward bomb bay, but he was badly burned. The navigator, Benjamin Franklin Edwards, apparently did not make it out. This may have been a deliberate choice on Edwards' part, as he had vowed to his family that he would not bail out over enemy territory.

Two of the men in the rear of the plane also apparently did not get out. Before he jumped out himself, left gunner Harold Schroeder noticed that ring gunner Abel had been wounded. Nobody knew what happened to the tail gunner, Corrigan; the interphone system had been shot up and there was no contact with him. But neither Abel nor Corrigan were seen on the ground. Schroeder, right gunner Goffery and radar operator Wells did make it to the ground, although Wells was injured.

Upon leaving the plane, Goldsworthy saw a parachute, which he believed was Patykula's, open up below him, quickly turn brown and burst into flames. Goldsworthy would never forget the sight of Patykula, "a fine boy, a grand friend and one of the best bombardiers in the Air Force," dropping to his death. But Goldsworthy did not have much time to grieve. He had been in too much of a hurry to get out of the plane to hook up his emergency oxygen and he was at almost 30,000 feet. Also, there were still Japanese fighters around and he didn't want to chance being machine-gunned in his parachute. So he fell free for what he estimated to be about 15,000 feet before pulling the ripcord. As he did so, he wondered if his chute would flame up like Patykula's... but it opened all right and he drifted slowly down into the uncertainty of captivity.

Here is the crew of the ill-fated Z-1:

AC	Maj Robert F. Goldsworthy
P	Col Richard T. King
B	1/Lt Walter J. Patykula
N	1/Lt Benjamin F. Edwards
FE	1/Lt Henry H. Warde
Radio	Sgt John A. Wright
Ring G	Cpl Robert R. Abel
RG	Sgt Thomas M. Goffery

LG Cpl Harold O. Schroeder  
Radar S/Sgt Carl T. Wells  
TG S/Sgt James P. Corrigan  
Obs Col Byron E. Brugge

When Z-1 was first hit and dropped out of formation, Capt Donald Thompson in Z-10, then flying in the Deputy Lead position on Goldsworthy's right wing, slowed down and tried to stay with the crippled plane. Z-24 apparently followed suit. But Z-1 was going down so fast that all this maneuver did was put Z-10 behind the rest of the squadron.

Stunned and sickened, the other crews watched Z-1 with their Group CO and the popular Goldsworthy go down in flames. From 30,000 feet no one saw any parachutes, and the consensus was that the whole crew had perished. Since the Japanese did not report the names of prisoners of war, it was not learned until the end of the war that there had been survivors.

But the Group still had a mission to finish. With Z-10 having fallen back, Maj Van Trigt in Z-25 quickly assumed command of what was left of the squadron. His bombardier, 1/Lt William Mayes, released bombs at 1513, with Z-5, Z-9 and Z-27 toggling on him. Z-10 and Z-24 released about 90 seconds later, but by that time they were clearly past the aircraft factory and over the outskirts of Tokyo. Z-28 also tried to release at about this time but had a complete rack malfunction. The bombardier, 2/Lt Howard McBride, had to crawl into the bomb bay later and trip the shackles manually. Z-7, as already related, had been badly shot up and had salvaged her bombs.

About ten minutes behind the second squadron, the first squadron under Lt Col McDowell in Z-42 had even more problems with the high winds aloft. They made their turn at the I.P. too soon, which put them in a position from which they could not recover. In fact, they were trying futilely to turn against the wind to reach the primary target when they let their bombs go from 29,000 feet. One plane, Z-47, experienced a partial rack malfunction and got only half its bombs away. Two planes of this squadron, Z-30 and Z-41, waited until they were over Tokyo to drop. This squadron was also heavily attacked by fighters.

In addition to Z-1 lost and Z-7 badly shot up, four other B-29's suffered minor damage. Z-5 had some cracked nose glass panels from .50 caliber shell casings ejected probably from Z-1. B-29's flying in the No. 4 position in an element would learn not to follow too closely behind and below the leader. Z-46 had some bullet and flak holes in the fuselage and wing tank, and Z-48 and Z-50 both had flak holes in the fuselage and wings.

B-29 gunners made a lot of claims on this mission – 1 destroyed, 6 probably destroyed and 9 damaged.

The destroyed claim, a Zeke, was by the ring gunner on Z-49, probably Sgt Edward Jojczyk.

The six claims of probably destroyed were:

An Irving by Z-45's right gunner, probably Sgt Robert E. Schurmann

An Irving by Z-28's tail gunner, probably Sgt Eugene B. Wood

An Irving shared by the left and tail gunners of Z-24, probably Cpl Eugene D. Kidrick and Cpl Albert M. Pasternack

A Tojo shared by the right and tail gunners on Z-22, probably Sgt Edwin D. Levin and Sgt Harold T. Hedges

A Tojo shared by the ring and tail gunners of Z-26, probably Cpl Joseph A. Kehrer and S/Sgt Jessie Irvine

A Zeke claimed by the right gunner on Z-28, probably Cpl James A. Bailey

And the nine claims of damaged were:

A Tojo by the left gunner of Z-42, probably Cpl Donald C. Hetrick

An Irving shared by the left and tail gunners of Z-47, probably S/Sgt William W. Stacy and Sgt Edmond L. Riley

A Tony by the bombardier of Z-45, probably 2/Lt Charles L. Smader

A Zeke by the tail gunner of Z-30, probably T/Sgt Walter V. Kinneman

A Tony by the left gunner of Z-25, probably Cpl Peter A. Sanchez

A Tony by the ring gunner of Z-5, probably Sgt Francis M. Corbett

A Tony by the bombardier of Z-9, probably 2/Lt William B. Wallace

A Tony by the tail gunner of Z-9, probably Cpl James D. Duggins

An Irving by the left gunner of Z-45, Sgt August O. Renner

These claims do not include any from the downed Z-1. On that plane, at least ring gunner Abel should be given

credit for a Tony damaged. AC Bob Goldsworthy also saw a fighter explode, but there's no way of knowing who got it.

As the bombers passed land's end and headed out to the relative safety of the sea, the Japanese fighters turned back and the crews breathed a sigh of relief. Sgt Jack Bennett, tail gunner on Z-45, McClanahan crew, badly needed a smoke. He nervously lit up a cigarette but then fumbled it and it dropped it down into the insulation padding lining the tail compartment. He groped for it but couldn't find it. The insulation began to smolder, then caught fire. Bennett began to shout in panic over the interphone. With the plane pressurized, he was trapped in the burning tail compartment. McClanahan dove from almost 30,000 feet down to 10,000 so the plane could be depressurized and the door to the tail compartment could be opened. Bennett's fellow gunners dragged him out but he had been badly burned and would spend the next 70 days in the hospital. Bennett was administered a shot of morphine for the pain and even recovered enough to start up the putt-putt, a normal responsibility of the tail gunner prior to landing. But Jack Bennett would never return to flight duty, at least not with the 500th. He would in time be replaced as tail gunner by Robert Cassidy after the Haley crew was disbanded in Jan 45. For the rest of the way home to Saipan, one of the other gunners had to stay in the tail compartment with a fire extinguisher to keep the smoldering padding from flaring up again.

The McNamer crew on Z-7 were having their problems too. Shot up and low on fuel, the crew lightened the plane by throwing out everything that wasn't firmly bolted down. The radar was out but they luckily picked up a bearing to Saipan. Then it was a matter of sweating out the fuel situation. Flight engineer 2/Lt James Bond didn't think they had enough to make it back to Saipan but somehow they did, the last plane in the Group to land. Not trusting the damaged landing gear, AC McNamer wisely decided to set down on Kobler Field, the B-24 strip. That way, they would not foul the runway at Isley for other returning B-29's. Sure enough, when they touched down the nose wheel collapsed. The gear pushed up thru the hatch and the bomber scraped down the runway on her nose, while all four propellers were bent back at the tips from striking the asphalt. "Hell's Belle" was dragged off the runway and would undergo long-term repair, but there were luckily no personnel injuries. McNamer's status went way up with the crew. He was even congratulated on his landing by Lt Col Dougherty, who with the loss of Col King was now in charge of the Group. Jack Heffner added a P.S. to his diary entry tonight: "Those double shots hit the spot exceedingly well for some reason tonight."

The rest of the planes landed without incident on Isley #1, even though the landing lights were turned off due to the continuing threat of air raids. The crews were exhausted. Ciardi was so tired he turned down the offer of drinks in the officers' quonset and didn't even bother to eat before crashing into his bunk.

A war correspondent from a St Louis newspaper showed up from nowhere to interview the McClanahan crew of the 883rd. He put information about the fire in his report home but apparently little else. As a result, ring gunner Bill Agee's parents went thru some anxious days until Bill could get word to them that he was all right.

It had been a tough mission with the heaviest opposition to date, and the 500th Bomb Group had lost its CO. Several planes had suffered damage. And damage assessment photos showed no hits within 3000 feet of the primary target. It was a sad night in the 500th Group.

Sad though it was on Saipan, back in Japan the surviving members of the Goldsworthy crew were having a much worse night.

They came to earth separately in Chiba Prefecture east of Tokyo, near the town of Tonosho. Col King landed in an open field, Maj Goldsworthy in a rice paddy, and Col Brugge somewhere not far away. It was only after reaching the ground that both King and Goldsworthy discovered that they had been burned, the former on the leg and face, the latter severely on the back of his hands. All three officers were quickly rounded up without resistance. King had lost his .45 getting out of the plane. Goldsworthy still had his and briefly contemplated using it but quickly realized the futility of doing so. Goldsworthy was badly beaten by a mob of villagers who might have killed him except for the intervention of a local leader. Then soldiers took charge, tying him up and blindfolding him. Later a truck arrived to take him away, then he was transferred to another truck containing two other bound prisoners. Still blindfolded, Goldsworthy did not find out until later that the other two were King and Brugge. After a long ride over bad roads, during which the prisoners were beaten, burned by cigarettes and otherwise abused, they were unloaded at a police station for a brief interrogation. Then it was back on a truck for another long, uncomfortable ride to the Kempei Tai (Military Police) Headquarters in Tokyo. Here they were interrogated and slapped around again, made to sign forms written entirely in Japanese (these were probably

confessions to having committed war crimes by bombing Japanese civilians), stripped of their clothing and thrown into separate cold, bare cells, followed by a final beating administered by a guard with a kendo club. A short time later their clothing and four small blankets were thrown in to them, and the men curled up on the cold, bare floor to try to rest their burned and bruised bodies as best they could. As he shivered, Goldsworthy now very much regretted having worn only his summer uniform under his flight suit. Winter in Japan was a far cry from sub-tropical Saipan.

A second group of survivors from Z-1 comprised flight engineer Warde, radio operator Wright, radar operator Wells and left gunner Schroeder. These men ended up on a truck together, tied and blindfolded, but Schroeder recognized the voices of the other men. He also learned that Wright was burned and Wells had an injured arm. When the Japanese asked about injuries, Schroeder said he was not injured and was removed from the truck. Schroeder eventually ended up at the Kempei Tai prison with King, Goldsworthy and Brugge, but the other three men were never seen again. Japanese records claim that these men died of their wounds on 4 Dec but given the non-life-threatening nature of their wounds that is not credible. The extensive website *Allied POWs in Japan* confirms that the men were taken to Chiba Hospital but concludes that they were probably poisoned there.

Right gunner Goffery was apparently picked up separately. He ended up at the Kempei Tai prison with the other four survivors.

#### **4 Dec 44**

After the loss of Col King and the Goldsworthy crew yesterday, the mood in the 500th Bomb Group was somber and tense today. Many men were getting edgy and a few had already reached their breaking points. Group Bombardier Capt Charles "Chili" McClintick was in the hospital with the "jitters" after one of the Japanese planes shot down in the raid of 27 Nov crashed too close to him. And last night Capt Richard Field, an experienced and respected AC in the 881st, suddenly cracked in his quonset. According to Robert Copeland, "Capt. Field started for the cliff last night before he was stopped and taken to the hospital." Field had dropped out of formation early with a bad engine on the 27 Nov mission, and he had had engine trouble again on yesterday's mission, this time having to make it back to Saipan on two engines. The overall stress and the loss of King and Goldsworthy were apparently too much for him. McClintick would return to duty with the 500th but Field was medically evacuated to the States. He would not be the only one to leave this way.

Field had previously flown numerous anti-submarine patrols in the Atlantic, enough to be awarded the Air Medal. According to his radar operator, Robert Cookson, Field had been "forced down in the ocean 3 times so he ought to be pretty good at ditching." I don't know if you could ever get good at ditching. One such event was enough to shake the nerves of most men. Fortunately, Richard Field would recover and remain in the Air Force.

In the British Royal Air Force, airmen who could no longer take the immense stress of combat were relieved from duty and officially labeled LMF – lacking moral fibre. To its credit, the US Army Air Forces treated its personnel more humanely. A man who felt he could not take it any more simply had to say so. He would generally be relieved from combat duty and reassigned to non-combat duty with no punishment or harm, except possibly to his promotion chances. This was a sensible policy. Better to have a man on the edge ground himself voluntarily than to take a chance on having him panic in combat, with potentially fatal consequences to his crew. However, in defense of the RAF, the USAAF had a much greater pool of manpower on which to draw and could afford to pursue such a policy.

Nerves in the 500th were not helped by the regular blasting carried out by engineers as part of daily construction activity. Anything being dug deeper than a couple of feet – foundations, drainage ditches, latrines – required blasting into the coral. Stanley Samuelson wrote, "Every time the engineers blast the coral on the hill, someone always jumps." Sometimes the explosions damaged more than just nerves. Today a blast near the hardstand of Z-50 of the 883rd Squadron put "one hole in underside of fuselage size of fist and several smaller holes in fabric of tail surface." Normally, planes were moved from their hardstands when blasting was scheduled in the vicinity, but someone must have miscalculated this time.

Bob Copeland, copilot on the Fitzgerald crew, went up to the line today to see "Old 692". That would be Z-8, 42-24692, which had been badly damaged during the big air raid of 27 Nov. "They're rapidly patching it up and getting it ready to fly." "Old 692" would not return to duty as soon as Copeland thought. She wouldn't fly another mission until February, and then it would be as Z-12, because well before that time a replacement plane would