become common procedure in the future. Nine B-25s and eight A-20s, flown by Grim Reapers, participated in the attack, bombing targets at Buna and Sanananda. Many machine gun positions were knocked out. One A-20 crash-landed at Pongant, and the rest of them returned safely to base. That afternoon the Bostons took off again to bomb parked enemy airplanes on Lac Airdrome. That night the Mitchells flew into the darkness in the hazardous flight over the Owen Stanley Range to hit shipping off Buna. This was characteristic of their operations these days. Two or three missions per day occurred frequently, a strain on men and aircraft, but they flew with their usual insouciance that no amount of hard work or dangerous attack could erase.

**Bismarck Sea**

The weather of 3rd March, 1943 was in favor of Rear Admiral Kimura and his 22 heavily-laden vessels cutting the waves of Vitiaz Straits. He hoped to reach Lae before the sun and its attendant bombers could thwart his purpose. This same factor opposed an anxious group of airmen, young men who flew Mitchell and Boston aircraft, men who were searching the skies for some small assurance of fairer weather. If the elements forbade it, aircraft could not fly, but on 3rd of March this grim, dusty group of lads knew that they must take off. They knew they had to stop that convoy—that determination, cold courage, the feeling of stark fear that was occasionally felt but always set aside with quiet gallantry—these were weapons that won the day for a little group of airmen known as the Grim Reapers. Set down such names as these for posterity: Major Ed Larner, Captain Ed Chudoba, Captain Glen Clark, Captain Bill Beck, Sergeant Harold Sorenson, Lieutenant Turner Messick, Flight Sergeant Bob Gthrie of the R.A.A.F., Captain John Heneanby, and many others. These names made history on the 3rd March 1943.

Through a temporary opening, showing briefly through the bleakness of the sky, hastily led the small group of bombers which, in a precise, co-ordinated attack of surprise with other bombers of the 5th and Australian Air Forces, was to prove to Admiral Kimura that “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Twelve Bostons and 18 Mitchells of the group joined with other heavy and attack bombers to hit the convoy which already was deploying over a wide area on the Huon Gulf. In the face of excellent co-operation between high, medium level and attack bombers at minimum altitude the enemy anti-aircraft became uncertain and inaccurate. Japanese fighter effectiveness was lost in the confusion of the varied attack. The planes proceeded to peel off when they reached the target. Each one made an individual attack on a vessel or vessels of the group. Swooping in at low level the strafing planes scattered Japanese anti-aircraft gunners with withering fire. Scarcely any damage was done to the bombers that accurately sowed their seeds, leaving burning hulls and submerged hulls behind them.

Major Ed Larner, leading his squadron in to attack, commanded his men to spread out and seek their own targets. He, himself, espied the largest warship of them all, a Teratsuki Class destroyer, and with an anticipatory smile bore down on its target. The radio crackled as Larner chaffed his wingmen: “Get off my wing, you guys—get your own damn ships! This one’s mine!” With these characteristic words, for Larner was an adventurer, he epitomized a fighting spirit that caused Perry to say: “We have sighted the enemy and they are ours.” The destroyer

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**Bismarck Sea—The Grim Reapers bring back photographic proof of a kill. Freighter is still moving, but sank soon after.**

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[7]
was sunk. Captain Bill Beck sized up another destroyer in the convoy and made his attack, only to find that the release mechanism in his bomb-bay wouldn't function. Not content to let well enough alone, he attacked again and again, to no avail. Someone else got the destroyer, however, and Beck brought back excellent photographs of the vessel, which he had strafed with growing animosity on every run. Lieutenant Bob Reid's Mitchell made a successful run on an 8,000 ton transport, directly hitting it with a bomb. As he left the convoy area he experienced considerable difficulty in finding his way out of the target, resulting in his flying over, and strafing, five more vessels before he was clear of the area.

The morning of 4th March presented a desolate scene in the Bismarck Sea—the hungry sea swallowed its prey, leaving as a grim reminder the bits of floating debris, the scattered rafts and ship's boats with a few bedraggled survivors. Careful planning, months of preparation, together with men, ships, and materiel were engulfed in a dark and fuming dungeon. The true story of this scene was that the tide had turned against the Japanese—they had failed, and would continue to fail.

Reapers Get a Sub

An enemy submarine, a large 1900 ton craft, one of the largest underwater raiders in the world, entered Lae Harbor and surfaced just at dusk on the evening of 19th March. Coded messages burned the ether and grimly excited men gathered in operations rooms. Crews stood by as the foundation was laid to get that sub at the exact time and place it reared its ugly head above the surface. Just as the night was spreading its cloak over the seas of Lae, a squadron of Mitchell bombers came in, sinister Grim Reapers, dimly silhouetted against the western sky. Five minutes later seven direct bomb hits by three of the bombers had left the submarine in a mass of flame, a gleaming funeral pyre in the night. Triumphant, the bombers made their way home through the darkness.

It was no routine barge hunt that brought the Grim Reapers to Cape Gloucester on the afternoon of 29th July; one plane being loaded with 500-pound bombs and flown by Lieutenant Don

American Medium Bombers Had An Astounding Field Day in Battle

(P. A. Rayner’s Convoy Story Continued from Page 1)

Much of the success of the day’s operations against the Jap convoy resulted from the North American medium bombers. It was an astounding field day for them.

While the Fortresses stayed high, the North American mediums skimmed the water level beneath the arc of fire of the Japanese ships to drive in a most effective and close bomb with most of the convoy.

Here is a plane by plane record of the North American medium bomber until each reported back to the base:

**Captains Robert Scott, of Nebraska, two direct hits on the target:**
Ran out of gas.

**First-Lieutenant Gordon McCready, New York City, two direct hits on 8,000-ton transport:**
Left in sinking condition.

**First-Lieutenant Gordon McElroy, New York City, two direct hits on 8,000-ton transport:**
Left in sinking condition.

**First-Lieutenant Robert C. Reed, of Nebraska, two direct hits on 5,000-ton transport:**
Sunk.

**First-Lieutenant John Carlin, of New Orleans, two direct hits on 8,000-ton transport:**
Sunk.

**First-Lieutenant Robert R. Mooney, of Tennesee, two direct hits on 5,000-ton transport:**
Sunk.

**First-Lieutenant Donald McNeil, of Shreveport, Louisiana, two direct hits on 8,000-ton transport:**
Sunk.

**First-Lieutenant Robert Reed, of Nebraska, two direct hits on 5,000-ton transport:**
Sunk.

**First-Lieutenant Robert R. Mooney, of Tennessee, two direct hits on 8,000-ton transport:**
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**First-Lieutenant John Carlin, of New Orleans, two direct hits on 5,000-ton transport:**
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Terribly torn and foundering badly, one of two Jap destroyers caught by the Third Group off Cape Gloucester prepares to sink beneath the sea.

bombed the harbor. Many vessels, left as isolated masses of flame, and conflagrations from the shore indicated the damage done there to fuel and ammunition dumps. And remember the names of men who scored their hits at Hansa Bay: Captain Curtis Payson, Lieutenant Phil Patton, Captain Ed Sounheim, Sergeant Mike Kischkum, Sergeant Harry Kiser, Lieutenant Vernon Vinson. Remember their names, for it was men like these that, through the four months to come, hurled thousands of tons of explosives on the enemy bastions of Wewak and Hansa Bay in an attempt to neutralize these bases.

The Mubo Valley—Here Allied and Japanese troops fought severe and prolonged battles culminating in the capture of Salamaua. Grim Reapers lent close support, accounted for hundreds of Japs.

Macclennan. Once again they knew that the “big stuff” was coming down, intent on a desperate reinforcement of the beleaguered New Guinea garrison. The Mitchells attacked two destroyers five miles off the cape, flying through a hail of anti-aircraft fire, and a swarm of determined Zero fighters. Both destroyers were reduced to twisted, burning metal, the tanks of the Zeros were decimated. And as the roster of great soldiers is prepared, put down the names of the hundred men led by Colonel Donald Hall that stretched the operative limit of their Mitchell aircraft to strike at Wewak on the 17th and 18th August. Across the waste of the New Guinea mainland flew the airmen of the Mitchells to destroy 166 aircraft, to sink three vessels and damage others. Add names such as these to the roster—Captain Phil Hawkins, Major Jim Downs, Sergeant Woodrow Butler, Flight Officer Jack Harrington—and many other names—American names that might have been a baseball team, but it was a desperate game they played. Enumerate these names, too, as the honored roll is sounded: Lieutenant Bob Widener, Sergeant Jim Leffler, Sergeant Francis Monahan. They gave their lives at Hansa Bay on 28th August when the terror of low-level attack was introduced to the little men with the clear-cut destinies.

Sweeping in over the coconut fringe of the harbor the Grim Reapers made their attack,
teeth. Add to the roster that Grim Reaper crew: Captain Dick Ellis, Lieutenant Bill Pearson, Sergeant Julius Miller, Corporal Bill Coleman, and all the other crews that sowed the seeds of death that felled the bastion of Lac. Add the names of the men that did unheralded, undramatic jobs such as the smoke-laying mission of 5th September that immersed American parachutists in a veil of mystery while they seized the strip at Nadzab. Put down the names of Lieutenant Ed Montagano, Captain Charlie Mayo, Corporal Harold Felo—inscribe the names of the rest of them, faithful, conscientious men, doing their jobs, be they sensational or routine.

Then on the morning of 27th September the Grim Reapers again ranged far afield to Wewak, growing Japanese base, where a harbor full of enemy merchantmen lay waiting. Three Mitchell squadrons took off from their base that morning, one to rake the harbor of Wewak, another to probe the straits between Kairiru and Muschu Islands and adjacent waters for any shipping anchored there. The third was to sweep into Muschu Harbor, an attack designed to remove all shipping from that base and to discourage the amassing of equipment for the Wewak garrison. Coming in at minimum altitude the Mitchells sprayed the harbor with gunfire as tons of high explosives wrought havoc among the vessels that had no opportunity to scurry in evasion. The anti-aircraft fire was intense, from vessels in the harbor, from the strong defenses on Wewak Peninsula, from the air-dromes, and from the two islands to the northwest. A solid wall of fire had to be penetrated to enter the target area. Fighter defense was also there, though the belated Japanese scarcely had time to lift their wheels from the ground at Boram and Wewak dromes before the tornado of steel and fire struck in all its fury. Four merchantmen and a tanker, together with heterogeneous small craft were left burning, broken hulks. Four enemy aircraft fell before the guns of the Mitchells. A scene of devastation was left at Wewak as victorious squadrons, with some aircraft crippled, but carrying on, departed down the New Guinea coast. Near Murik Lagoon one of the Mitchells fell behind, mortally wounded, and a flash of flame in the jungle was the memorial of four men. Remember their names: Lieutenant Wayne Berta, Lieutenant Mike Green, Sergeant Cliff Hall, Sergeant Lloyd Popwell—they gave their lives and swelled the growing ranks of gallantry. And remember, too, Lieutenant Walter Lee; the gods were with him as 7.7 mm. fire from a Japanese position ripped through his plane to break in two the pistol in his shoulder holster, the gun saving his life but not preventing painful wounds. Trace these names on the plaque of honor: Lieutenant Keith McKee, Lieutenant Roland Nelson, Lieutenant G. W. Kylius, Sergeant D. W. Carpenter, Private J. Gulli—they gave their lives, but not until two vessels had been sunk and buildings destroyed on shore. Add to these the names of leaders: Captain Raymond Wilkins, Major David Conley, Captain Don MacGillan; theirs was the courage to face the wall of fire in leadership of their squadrons; theirs were the steady hands that never swerved or waivered.

**Rabaul—Step One**

First in the Southwest Pacific, first to blast the outpost stronghold of Lac, first in low-level attack, the Grim Reapers led again on 12th October when three Mitchell squadrons struck at fortress Rabaul to blast a dangerous naval air force being concentrated there. The target was Rapopo Airdrome on the southern shore of Blanche Bay, the newest of the Rabaul airstrips. It was a major bomber base from which the enemy could, and did, strike tellingly at the Allies in the Solomons and New Guinea. The attack was so planned that the runway and re- vealment areas on both sides of it were to be covered with devastating fire and a hail of para-
chute-borne fragmentation bombs, an attack designed to destroy every aircraft hidden among the coconut trees of the plantation through which Rapopo had been cut by the enemy. Other lucrative targets, such as personnel, fuel and supply dumps were scattered throughout this plantation, hidden beneath the umbrella of palms, but not immune to modern lightning from 50 feet. Forty-one Mitchell bombers, nearly 200 air-minded young men, took off that morning to circle over the rendezvous point of Gona Wreck, to form their perfect V-of-Vs, a graceful diagram against the background of the sky. With a roar of sixty thousand horses, modern birds headed into the sun to reap a new and greater harvest. Put down the names of the crew of that leading bomber: Colonel Donald Hall, Flight Officer Abraham Shook, Sergeant Tom Kratz, Sergeant Bob Dacms, Lieutenant Lawrence Lowery, inscribe that pilot's name—Lieutenant John Baldwin... the co-pilot beside him—Lieutenant George Thomas.

Again on 25th October, the Mitchells returned to Rapopo. This time the enemy was waiting, and when the bombers were wiggling over Kabanga Plantation there was heroism in the skies as the unswerving formation returned the attackers' fire. Men died over Rapopo that day, victims of enemy bullets, cremations in their own aircraft as they found their glory in a crash. Remember the gunners that fought off the swarms around them, the men whose staccato fire was a comfort to those who relied on them for life... men like Sergeant Joe Berube, who died at his guns, Corporal Bill Schneenburger, Sergeant Mike Kishkum, Put down Lieutenant Dick Greenhalgh and Lieutenant Bill Mackey. While still many miles from their target both were wounded by enemy fighters, their bomber rendered almost unserviceable by the vicious fire from all quarters. Yet that Mitchell flew through the fire of the Rapopo defenses to accurately place its bombs in the target. And remember Lieutenant Bob Miller, Lieutenant Bob H.He and their gunners, Sergeants Glendon Harris and Joe Berube. And remember, too, that Japanese fighter, the inspired fanatic who found a doubtful glory in crashing his plane into Bob Miller's Mitchell, bringing death to his enemy and himself.

The two raids on Rapopo left an impressive score, a tale of destruction which told of many aircraft on Rapopo destroyed, fires in supply dumps choked with food, petrol, weapons of war, and parts for aircraft, dead men sprawled on Rapopo Airdrome, little men who died while madly eluding the terror of the forward firing guns of forty Mitchell bombers. The accounts of the heroism of these days live with us, the courage in face of fire, the coolness of men who saw their target through a vista of streaking tracers. The challenge was out to the enemy, one that forewarned their certain doom as time went on.

**Rabaul—Step Two**

In the latter months of 1943 the foundation was laid for the complete neutralization of Rabaul, the major Japanese outpost in the Southwest Pacific. One of the best harbors in the Pacific, Rabaul had been, since January 1942, the chief supply center and naval and air base.