

**Roy "Decker" Woldt**  
**VFW Post 8337 Liberty Grove Wisconsin**

**Service Record: While attached to the 35<sup>th</sup> Fighter Control Squadron – 1941 to**

**Our 35<sup>th</sup> Fighter Control Squadron was assigned to Pappy Boyington's "Black Sheep" Squadron during our tour of duty from Guadalcanal to Vella La Vella in the Solomon Islands.** Our mission was to maintain radio contact with them during missions against Japanese fighters. My buddy and I were on duty when Pappy Boyington and his Wingman were shot down near Bonganville and assumed killed in action. Pappy Boyington's wingman was killed but "Pappy" was rescued by a Japanese sub and held as Prisoner of War (POW) for the duration of the war. I consider our squadron was fortunate to have experienced only a few casualties.

**During this time in the Solomon Islands, we were, as far as we know, the only communications between the fighter pilots, the airbase at Henderson Field, and the fighter strip which could tell them where they were with our DF units.** Many a pilot had no way to return to base without the aid of the 35<sup>th</sup> after a mission, especially with a shot up plane or a disoriented pilot low on fuel. Though we were the orphans of the South Pacific, the 35<sup>th</sup> was and still remains, as one of the most closely knit "families" of the war in the South Pacific. We were, and are, very fortunate people. Our squadron was and continues to keep in touch and stay close although our numbers are dwindling. We've held 25 reunions since 1982. My wife Eloise and I sponsored our 1998 reunion in Amarillo, Texas.

**Following is a brief history of our 35<sup>th</sup> Fighter Control Squadron, written by the Chairman of our Reunion August 7, 1982:**

During 1941, many graduates from Scoot Field Radio School were sent to Hamilton Field California to form the 24<sup>th</sup> Interceptor Squadron. This squadron shipped out of San Francisco for APO Plum (Philippine Islands) on the USS President Garfield, December 5<sup>th</sup> 1941.

We were approximately half way between San Francisco and Honolulu when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. The Garfield was immediately returned to San Francisco and Hamilton Field and the 24<sup>th</sup> was reformed, repainted, renamed, and returned to duty.

On January 12, 1942 we again shipped out becoming the first AEF to leave the US after war was declared. This time we were in a convoy for destinations unknown. After seventeen days at sea, section "C" (approximately 85 men on the President Monroe) were met by the Achilles and escorted to Suva, Fiji. There we disembarked while Headquarters Section "A" and "B" (berthed on the USS Mariposa) proceeded to Australia.

Our first night was spent in an old sugar mill between Suva and Nausori. The next day's camp was set up in a sugar cane field near Nausori. There we were assigned to the 70<sup>th</sup> interceptor Squadron (which became the 70<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron) for rations and pay call.

*Still unanswered is what happened to the 24<sup>th</sup> when we returned to Hamilton and what happened to the 698 signal corps that landed in Fiji with us and the 70.<sup>th</sup> Also unanswered is what happened to the 35.<sup>th</sup> For approximately 20 months we had no contact with headquarters squadron, where always attached to some other outfit for quarters and rations, and in general were like step-children with periodic changes in foster parents.*

Our duties in Fiji consisted mainly of communications such as radar reports, weather information, retransmitting to operations in the South Pacific, and managing general point-to-point messages. Men from our small squadron were serving in operations around Nausori, Nadi, Lautoka, Racki-Racki, and Yasawa. By this time, some had left our squadron and others came in until we had 105 men and one officer.

Prior to the outbreak of war, almost all in our squadron were enlisted men with some regular army career men. Later we received draftees. Most men were radio operators and technicians trained at Scott Field except for the administrative personnel such as our First Sgt, and a few of the regular army personnel. About this time we got our own motor pool staffed mostly by personnel not trained in radio operations.

After many months in Fiji, the 35<sup>th</sup> was merged with the 58<sup>th</sup> fighter control from Brisbane Australia to form the 319<sup>th</sup> Fighter Control Squadron and sent to the Solomon Islands for communications and D.F. work among islands such as Vella Lavella, Bouganville, Munda, Guadalcanal, Treasury Island, the Russells, and others.